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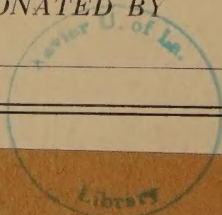
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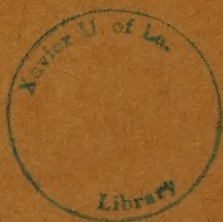
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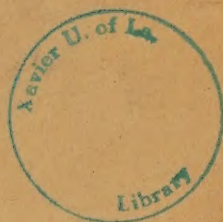
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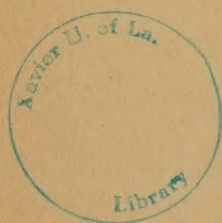
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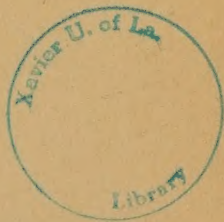






BLACK IVORY—

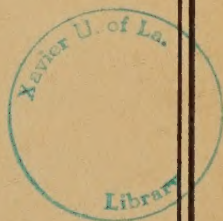
By POLAN BANKS





Black Ivory

By POLAN BANKS



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TO MY MOTHER
JEANNE ISABEL BANKS
SWEETEST DAUGHTER
OF THE HOUSE
OF
Abravanel de Polan

PREFATORY GESTURE

As a background for an American historical romance Louisiana between 1810 and 1816 appears a very apt selection, and New Orleans about the time of the English invasion a judiciously chosen stage. Even more happy seems the choice, for a hero and protagonist, of Jean Lafitte, smuggler and slave-trader, also strongly suspected of piracy and near-piracy at not infrequent intervals through a considerable period of time, but not certainly any sort of rascal, and indubitably very much of a gentleman; popular, admired, even beloved. *Black Ivory* is a felicitous title.

An historical romance is likely to interest its readers in proportion to the enthusiasm of its author for his plot, his characters, and their environment. (What measure of success my *El Supremo* has had has been due largely to the completeness with which I was carried away by what I had read in the writings of the Robertsons and others concerning Paraguay and Francia.) In any historical romance the blaze of the author's delight in his material is what kindles the glow of enjoyment in his readers.

Considering what I know of the author of *Black Ivory*, of his absorption in his work, of his flair for what is worth writing about, of his plot and characters, I forecast that readers of *Black Ivory* will find themselves interested, entertained, and rewarded.

EDWARD LUCAS WHITE.

January 16, 1926.

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PROLOGUE—

CHAPTER THE FIRST:

*Wherein Lizette Fondac
Makes a Great Sacrifice
and One Jean Lafitte Makes
a Momentous Decision*

I

BUT, Jean, *mon frère*, this is not your quarrel! 'Tis folly to fight this man—madness! *Mon Dieu!* I'm sure this Brouillard meant no offense. No doubt he was well in his cups."

His companion turned on him with sudden fury.

"Enough, Pierre, enough! I am no longer a child to be told what to do! I love Lizette, and this is my affair—mine alone. You should be the last to interfere—you!"

Pierre Dominique Lafitte smiled deprecatingly at his younger brother; this fair-skinned, handsome youth with the coal-black eyes of their long-dead mother, and the uncertain personality of an uncountable line of temperamental ancestors, that was as surely his heritage.

"Jean," said Pierre, patiently, "you are but a hot-headed youth, with all the foibles and fancies of youth. I tell you that Brouillard but jested . . ."

"Jested? *Sacre nom de Dieu!* When he named her '*filles de joie*'? . . . When he dared—*dared*—call my Lizette a courtesan? A sorry jest 'twill be for him—a bitter jest! By all the devils of Satan he shall—"

Pierre Lafitte shook his head sadly, angrily. He had all along mistrusted this affair. On the very first

day of their visit to this sunny island of Mauritius, when Jean had encountered Lizette Fondac, the fisherman's daughter, and as promptly fell in love with her, he had had disquieting fears. Hitherto, he knew, his impetuous yet well-poised brother had rather shied away from the fateful sex. Being experienced, he would have intervened in this affair, but had refrained, fearful of precipitating matters.

Of course Lizette was beautiful. Too beautiful, he thought, musing on her delicate patrician features and shapely hands and feet. Without doubt she possessed good blood—Brouillard had hinted at that—and it was reasonable to believe that morose old Fondac was not even her father. Even he, Pierre, the *bon vivant*, to whom beautiful women were no novelty, had been momentarily intrigued by her unusual beauty and unsophisticated charm, but he was too sensible—so he told himself—to lose his head over a mere chit of a girl, a fisherman's wench. That Jean had done so was to be deplored; yet he was young, inexperienced—and obstinate.

Pierre sighed a *blasé*, sophisticated sigh.

"This Brouillard, Jean—do you know that he is an excellent shot? And, since you are the challenger, it is most likely that he will choose pistols rather than steel—more's the pity! I tell you frankly, *garçon*, I have no great liking for this business. There are too many pretty women in the world, as it is, to risk losing your temper, and mayhap your life. Think, first. You are neither the legal guardian, nor yet the betrothed, of this girl. It is not your quarrel."

Jean shrugged his shoulders impatiently . . . nervously.

"It matters not, Pierre. I will fight him—and kill him."

"Don't be over-confident," dryly. "It is more probable that he will kill—you! Don't be a fool!"

"The outcome is on the knees of the gods. If he kills me, I shall die content, knowing I died for *her!*"

"Heroics are quite unnecessary," observed Pierre, resignedly. "If you're determined to be a target for Brouillard, it's no use—"

"My mind is quite made up," returned Jean, flushing. "But since our ideas do not coincide, please do not interfere. I'm sure that Bonville, or De Queux, will be glad to second me."

"I surrender," said Pierre. "If you are determined on being slaughtered, of course I'll second you. It is my right. And if you must be a fool, I had just as well enjoy your folly as the next one. I'll hunt up our fine captain's friend. *Au revoir!*"

With an expressive shrug, the elder Lafitte stalked out of the tavern and disappeared into the diamond-studded night. Jean, staring after him curiously, stood stockstill, a picture of indecision, and then, turning, sat down near the table, and began to shoot, with careful precision, at the three candles on the trestle near the window.

When Pierre returned, later, having made arrangements for the coming meeting, he found the air smoke-laden and his brother haggard.

There were still three candles burning on the trestle.

II

Dawn broke in a symphony of gorgeous rosy tints, heralding the awakening of the ardent monarch of the

BLACK IVORY

world of light. The waves, their deep green color variegated with shifting opaline lusters and gleams of phosphorescent hues, lazily chased one another over the restless sea, to dash into clouds of joyous spray upon the shining beach.

Signs of life were already apparent in the line of fishing boats on and near the shore, and shreds of wraith-like smoke were appearing in the picturesque fishermen's colony on the inlet. A new day—and a memorable one—had begun for Mauritius.

In the grove behind the quaint little stone chapel, the principals of the little drama had already assembled. The Lafittes—Jean, eager, yet not without a touch of nervousness, and Pierre Dominique, looking rather too perturbed for a man of the world. Across the little clearing was Brouillard, tall, heavily built, with pugnaciously twisted mustachios. A French naval officer—his second—and the resident doctor completed the little party.

At a word from the knight of the lancets, who was evidently also the referee, the duelists took their places, back to back, and marched away ten paces. Pistol in hand, still back to back, they awaited the physician's signal. The Mauritian raised his arm for dramatic effect, and began to count, very solemnly.

"One—

"Two—"

A young girl, hair as yet uncombed, lids still sleep-laden, and panting heavily, appeared at the head of the path, and ran toward them with horror-filled eyes. They were too absorbed to see her.

"Three—!"

She was almost upon them, now. So excited were

the five men in the tense scene they were enacting that they failed to notice her footsteps, which audibly reached them. Simultaneously with the doctor's next word she burst among them, exhausted with running, but not before he had cried—

“Fire!”

At the word both turned and fired. Brouillard's shot was a second later than Jean's. Lafitte's had gone wild, so nervous was he, and he immediately realized that his doom was imminent. He was at the mercy of his enemy. But that interim of less than a single second, almost the briefest timable space, was enough to complete the tragedy. In that moment Lizette Fondac sprang between them, her body acting as a shield for Jean, just in time to intercept the bullet meant for him. A moment later she sank on the turf at Jean's feet, clutching convulsively at her bleeding bosom.

With a cry of utter horror, Jean dropped to his knees, holding her close to him, calling to her, with such an unspeakable anguish in his voice that Pierre himself, momentarily stunned by the shock, could not hold the tears back.

Confusion reigned. Villagers, attracted by the sound of the shots, were now appearing at the head of the path, led by the old curé of the chapel. Brouillard, with one backward, horrified glance, disappeared into the forest.

As for Jean, he was as if crazed, pressing Lizette's still form close to himself, and babbling mad, incoherent terms of endearment. She had been almost instantaneously killed. With difficulty he was sepa-

rated from her motionless body and led away by his brother.

III

"Why do you follow me about, Pierre? Can I not have a moment's peace?" There was a nervous petulance in his voice.

Pierre Dominique smiled, albeit with commiseration, as he looked at his brother. Jean Lafitte had indeed changed in the past week, changed for the worse. There were hollow circles under his lustrous coal-black eyes, which afforded a startling contrast to his unusual fairness of skin. But it was the aspect of the eyes themselves which gave Pierre cause for concern, now dull, now sparkling, but ever brooding—two silent pools of apathy.

Pierre Dominique answered shortly, his own lips drawn together.

"Because I cannot trust you alone."

Jean did not answer, but stared at the sea, its waters gleaming in the sunlight. He well knew why Pierre did not trust him to himself, for he had attempted suicide in the first ecstasy of his grief. But a week had passed since then, and, if his brother had known, he no longer contemplated self-extinction. The law of youth and nature forbade it—and the young Frenchman was but human. But he disliked Pierre Dominique's watchfulness. He wished to be alone, to sit and brood; to commune with the invisible; to give vent to his aching grief, his loneliness; to let his emotional nature run the gamut of his varied sensations.

THE SACRIFICE OF LIZETTE FONDAC

Jean Lafitte's was a most unusual character, which was understood by no one, himself least of all. Temperamental, imaginative, impulsive, together with other strange mixtures of characteristics, he might perhaps be called a genius in the embryo. But time alone could tell what form that genius would take. At the present he was but a crucible, containing an assortment of ingredients that would sooner or later take tangible form. And now this crucible of emotions had been prematurely stirred.

But Pierre Dominique could not know this, nor understand it if he did. In Jean he saw a masculine counterpart of their long-dead mother, and lavished all the affection that his nature was capable of on his younger brother.

"Jean," said he, breaking the silence, "I wish to leave this accursed island. Come, rouse yourself out of this lethargy. Pining and brooding will not bring back the dead."

"Perhaps not, my brother."

"Come then, Jean, let's sail for Bordeaux. You will soon forget this. We will go into trade, as our father wishes us to do, and meanwhile you can read and study to your heart's content."

Jean stared across the sea, his gaze wandering across the spacious blue purity of the Indian Ocean.

"I cannot go back—Pierre. It is impossible."

"But you cannot mean to stay, boy. It will not profit you and you surely cannot forget, here."

"I do not wish to forget!"

"I know, I know, *mon pauvre garçon*, but you must leave; this is no place for you."

BLACK IVORY

"Well, *mon frère*, if it will add to your happiness, I will tell you; I do intend to leave Mauritius."

"*Bon!* That's the way to talk, Jean. We will—"

"*Mais non*, you are wrong. I am not going back to Bordeaux."

"Why not?" puzzled.

"I go elsewhere."

"Very well; we will go elsewhere if that is your desire. There are—"

"But you do not understand, Pierre. Our ways must part, from now on."

"*Ventre-saint-gris!* The boy is mad!"

"Perhaps. But I have a duty to perform . . . and you have not!"

"What do you mean?" The older Lafitte looked vaguely uneasy.

"Why, pretend, *mon frère*? You know that I must find—and punish—the murderer of Lizette!"

"Oh, that?" But his seeming indifference did not fool Jean. He could see that Pierre was troubled in reality, now.

"Just that! If I have to spend the rest of my life hunting him, I shall find Brouillard; the coward, the base scoundrel!"

Here Jean paused and cursed the absent Brouillard, thoroughly, bitterly. For a few moments Pierre listened quietly, making no comment, but he was thinking hard. At last the younger man subsided, his store of invective exhausted, but still seething with rage. For the moment his grief was forgotten, and it was not long before he regained control of himself.

Jean glanced shamefacedly at his brother, expecting some remark of surprise . . . displeasure. But none

came. He wondered. It was one of the very rare moments of his life that he had given way to his passion, and he was ashamed, for, unconsciously, perhaps, he was very proud of his self-control. He glanced at his brother and looked away again.

Pierre Dominique spoke, quietly, authoritatively: "Very well, then, Jean. We shall first find Brouillard and then give him up to justice."

"No, no, Pierre; you are too noble. I will not draw you into my quarrel; you must not come!"

"We will go together, *garçon*."

"We will not! Don't forget you owe some one else a duty, Pierre. Do you forget your Margot?"

Pierre Dominique turned away his face.

"No, I do not forget Margot, brother mine. But we will forget her."

"We will not!"

"Margot will not miss one gallant; she has enough and to spare!"

"Is that the Lafitte spirit?" demanded Jean, rather irrelevantly, but glad to be able to take the offensive.

Pierre looked chagrined.

"Perhaps not, but there are many fair women in this world, and but one brother. And besides, Jean, I am not the marrying kind. But enough of this foolish talk. We—"

"You are right, *mon frère*. Enough of this foolish talk! As for you, Pierre Dominique, you will return home—to Bordeaux. Go into trade, and marry your Margot."

"What do you mean to do?"

"What will I do? I shall be my own master, with my own ship. I have thought it over, Pierre. No

BLACK IVORY

doubt Brouillard will go far away—to the West Indies, or the Caribbean. Therefore I shall go there. Sooner or later I shall meet him!”

“And then you must turn him over to the authorities, for trial. You should want no more revenge than that, Jean. In reality, Lizette’s death was an accident.” Apparently Pierre had assented to Jean’s determination to hunt out Brouillard.

“Perhaps,” said Jean, enigmatically.

“I see you are determined, Jean. But I tell you, I do not approve of your intention. Brouillard will be caught, sooner or later, never fear. Leave it to justice.”

Jean stared down at the sand, watching the swift flight of a sand-fiddler. In a single moment it seemed he had become a man—with mature thoughts and mature determination. The youth had disappeared forever.

“You do not understand, Pierre! I loved—” In his glistening eyes was an immeasurable anguish—the fires of an ecstatic mental torture.

“No, Jean, you did not. You are but a boy. You do not know what real love is.”

“Nonsense! *Nom de Dieu!* It is Brouillard himself that I want—to meet again! To punish him—to make him pay.”

“But he was really not to blame,” Pierre pleaded, half frightened at the vindictiveness of his young brother.

“Not to blame—not to blame?” cried Jean Lafitte, furious, unreasoning. “*Dieu!* Not to blame, you say? Can’t you understand, *mon frère?* Can’t you realize?” There was a strained note in his voice. “No, he will

not be punished for killing Lizette—for that alone he might be pardoned! But do you forget that he dared to insult her? That he called her a 'wanton'? 'Wanton'! Hear me, Pierre, I shall send him to hell with my own hand, if I hang for it! By Our Lady I swear it!"

Pierre Lafitte crossed himself, almost unconsciously.

The younger Lafitte, his face pale, his eyes flashing in the way that later became characteristic, made a striking picture.

And his brother realized that this was not mere boyish heroics, that this was a little more than a dramatic pose. Jean was fiercely in earnest, even if his earnestness was theatrical. He was dedicating his life to a purpose which, whether laudable or open to criticism, was yet a definite purpose. He was a man, now, to think and act for himself.

Pierre Dominique stared at his brother for a long time, his own face impassive and impersonal. But in his eyes was a searching, probing gaze. What he saw apparently satisfied him.

"I think I understand, Jean," he said, quietly, and dropped his gaze.

Together they stared at the sea, silently, broodingly.

CHAPTER THE SECOND:

*How a Gentleman Pirate
Catches a Tartar, and the
Personage in the Moon Is
Proven to Be a Woman*

I

THE great brig, its rakish, slanting masts and white spars clearly delineated against the azure of sea and sky, was gradually taking on a somber air as the daylight slowly waned.

Everything about her, from the grim black hull with its carved and gilded figurehead to its tapering stern and its trim lines, bespoke its true occupation. When one thoughtfully noted the unusual spread of canvas, weather-beaten, perhaps, but still snowy when contrasted with the deep blue ultra-marine of the Caribbean, one felt assured that his guess was correct. And if this mythical spectator by any chance should go close enough to catch a glimpse of the vicious black guns peeping through the ports, he would be doubly convinced.

This sinister vessel, clearly built for speed, was undoubtedly a pirate.

And this was but natural, for this was the eventful summer of the year 1806, when the Caribbean Sea was the cruising-ground of the most ruthless buccaneers of any period, masking their piracy under the guise of privateersmen; more to be dreaded than the adventurers who sought golden galleons, treasure-chests, and captive beauties.

THE GENTLEMAN PIRATE

And what name is so boldly gilded on the stern?
The *Lizette*. . . .

The *Lizette*—Jean Lafitte. One and inseparable, or, so it is said. Jean Lafitte, the handsome youth with tragic eyes; the daring freebooter who is the talk of Havana, of Maracaibo, of Carthagená, and of the Mexican Gulf from the bayous below New Orleans to the shores of Yucatan.

Jean Lafitte, who, it is said, hates all women.

The man who has successfully resisted the wiles of every siren of these southern seas. Impossible? A pirate a woman-hater? A woman-hater a pirate? It would seem so. . . . Yet the gentlemen rovers of the Caribbean shake their heads sagely. There is something behind it all. . . .

It is whispered that the youth with the eloquent eyes has been crossed in love, that he has met with a disappointment, that he has turned to the profession of piracy as the only occupation fierce enough to obliterate his memories. Thus argue the "ladies"—the courtesans—of the Caribbean ports.

And perhaps they are right. But they do not know that not only for forgetfulness, but for vengeance, has this mystery man joined the turbulent gentry of the sea—a vengeance that, after three years, still eludes him.

The three years that have passed since Lafitte expressed to his brother, on the beach at Mauritius, his determination to hunt out Brouillard, have done much toward the shaping of the life of the young Frenchman. Contrary to his expectations and wishes, Pierre Dominique had persisted in his resolve to accompany him, and, together, they had set sail for the Caribbean.

BLACK IVORY

Once there, with ample funds coupled with the knack of making friends, it was not long before they were serving their apprenticeship in piracy. After their first voyage they fitted up and manned a small but speedy ship.

At the end of their second year Jean, who had taken the leadership, was in command of a heavily armed brig whose fame was to fly the length and breadth of every lane of the sea. At the end of their third year the youth was a man, feared and respected by both fellow-rovers and victims.

It was not until the beginning of that third year, however, that Lafitte got definite news as to the whereabouts and doings of Brouillard, the object of his long search.

The former French officer, as he had anticipated, had also joined the bands of the Brotherhood of the Caribbean. And he, too, like Jean, had sprung to notoriety overnight, as it were. But his was an assumed name and it was only a chance recognition of him by Pierre Dominique, in Maracaibo, that informed Lafitte that Brouillard, the former naval officer, and "*Le Renard Noir*" ("the Black Fox"), of whom he had heard much but never met, were one and the same.

On ascertaining this fact, Jean had immediately sailed for Maracaibo, to arrive and find his quarry gone. And so began a chase that lasted a year. Whether or not the Black Fox knew that Lafitte was hunting him, or whether it was chance that was to blame, they never met. In every nook and corner of the Caribbean did the *Lizette* pry her inquisitive prow, but so far her search was unrewarded.

THE GENTLEMAN PIRATE

The *Lizette* was only a few miles off Guadaloupe, in the hope of falling in with some spoil-laden French privateer, which, using that colony for the base of their operations in preying upon the British West Indian trade, might be making for the not-far-distant harbor of Basse Terre. With the magnificent impartiality that characterized the man, Lafitte took toll from French ships as well as from those of any other nationality. In these days of political change in the mother country, Jean bore her not too much love. The Lafittes were not Bonapartists.

II

"Sail ho!"

The cry, called out from the heights of the shrouds, reverberated over the ship like a trumpet-call.

For a moment there was silence, broken only by the lazy swish of the sea against the ship's side. Then the deck came to life as if by magic. The moon, just beginning her climb across the partly clouded heavens, illuminated the expanse of phosphorescent waters, at intervals, with a clear and mellow light.

A mile or so to the east could be seen the upper spars and vaguely indefinite bulk of a ship. If it had not been for the fact that the moon had been hidden behind a bank of light clouds for the past half hour, the stranger would have been detected long before. Again the cry rang out:

"Sail ho!"

By this time Lafitte himself was on deck and the bulwarks were already lined by many of his men, whose number was rapidly increasing.

BLACK IVORY

"Jacques!"

A short, wiry young seaman with bright reddish hair and an astonishing number of freckles quickly responded to Jean's call.

"Call Ramon . . ."

"*Mon capitaine* will fight?"

"Send Ramon to me at once," impatiently. "And Pedro."

The auburn-haired youth was gone in a flash. A minute later Ramon, the mate, and Pedro, the chief gunner, both of them half-breed Spaniards, came for orders. Pierre Dominique was not on board the *Lizette* at this time, but was encamped with a small hunting party at an island rendezvous some thirty miles away, where Jean was to join him the next morning and take aboard his additions to the ship's larder.

"You passed the word?"

Ramon grunted and waved his hands toward the bow. All was activity on deck. Its former aspect had changed magically. Boarding pikes, pistols, cutlasses, and other small arms were being laid out and shot was being placed on the racks.

Lafitte was anything if not cautious. Although he very well knew the quality of the *Lizette*, he also knew that it was very possible to catch a Tartar in the form of a heavily-armed ship, which had been, as likely as not, sent out for the express purpose of punishing his many depredations on the French, British, and Spanish commerce.

For a full minute Jean studied the approaching vessel with his glass.

"It is a big ship," he said, in an aside.

THE GENTLEMAN PIRATE

Ramon nodded. "I thought as much." He hesitated. "Do you think it is wise to attack, Don Juan?" The Spaniards invariably called Lafitte by this title.

"It is English . . . yes, see, they are running up the British flag. Might it not be a frigate?"

"We shall take the risk. At the worst the *Lizette* can use the better part of discretion and show them a clean pair of heels. What say you, Pedro?"

The brawny gunner fidgeted, averting his eyes. He had just put down his own glass.

"To tell the truth, Don Juan, I like not its look. And of course the flag doesn't mean anything."

"Then you think we . . . should not fight?"

"I think we should show them our heels, yes. There is a stiff breeze. Let's get out of gun-shot before they get in range. We could easily—"

Suddenly Ramon cursed audibly.

"How blind I am! That ship is one of the Brotherhood! It is the ship you seek."

His two companions turned on him quickly.

"Do you recognize it?" demanded Lafitte.

The mate nodded his head slowly, putting down his glass.

"I have seen her but once," he answered, quietly, "but I could recognize her anywhere."

"You are sure?" demanded Jean, impatiently.

"It is the Black Fox!" breathed Ramon, heavily.

For a moment it seemed that Jean's heart stood still. So unexpected was Ramon's news that he stood rooted to the spot, motionless, expressionless. But within, his mind was in a tumult. At last, at last, by the favor of the gods he had stumbled on his quarry.

"We shall fight!" he exclaimed, the joy of battle

BLACK IVORY

with his enemy lighting his face, his tone thrilling his hearers. Ramon showed his amazement. Until this moment he had not known Lafitte sought the Black Fox as an enemy.

"But when the Black Fox knows that we are of the Brotherhood, señor, there will be no trouble," he said, not in fear, but adverse to hard knocks with so redoubtable an adversary.

"I said that we will fight!" answered Jean, curtly.

"But, Don Juan—"

"Enough! It is my will. Pass the word to the gunners, Pedro. We will first give him some of his own strategy, and then give him a smashing broadside."

He turned. Pedro grunted. His not to question his chief. Saluting awkwardly, he left. Wolves of the sea both, wolf would prey on wolf. Honor among thieves was respected when convenience demanded it, but it was not unusual for one member of this wolfpack of the sea to prey upon another. Pedro grinned hideously; there would be an interesting fight.

"Run up the black flag," ordered Lafitte, "but do not break it out until I give the word. Have the men in readiness for boarding. We'll pay the Black Fox our respects with a salute, and then make a visit on board. But don't forget that our visiting cards must be sure to reach them . . . and find them in."

The Spaniard's lips curled as he nodded appreciation of the grim pleasantry. Another moment and he, too, had gone.

Lafitte returned to his study of the oncoming vessel, a set smile of anticipation playing about his tight-

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pressed lips. As he stood there, a grim, lonely figure, the black flag was run up, ready to be broken out at his signal. The gunners were standing to their guns, matches in hand.

By now the stranger was only fifty yards away. A tall, heavily-built, bearded man, stood on the quarter-deck. With an inward thrill, Jean realized that he was observing his arch-enemy.

In another moment the hail of the Black Fox came across the water, asking the name of Jean's vessel. As he did so, her coy ladyship, the moon, re-emerged from behind a cloud, suddenly throwing the two ships into full relief. By way of answering to his question, the black flag of the *Lizette* was swiftly broken out, where it was caught by the night breeze and, because of the added moonlight, promptly proclaimed the presence of the rover. Came another cry from the Black Fox that was both surprise and disappointment.

By this time, however, the stranger, which had been approaching with a confidence that was foolhardy, bore up. Even the friendliest of wolves are distrustful.

But it was too late. No one knew better than Lafitte the terrible, demoralizing effect of a sudden smashing broadside, and it was just this confusion that he wished to create in the pack of the Black Fox.

"Fire!"

Simultaneously with the terrific crash of the guns the pirates, with a yell, rose from behind the bulwarks and poured out of other places of concealment as the guns raked the stranger from stem to stern, doing deadly execution and bringing down the foremast, a

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wreckage of ropes and sails, upon the deck. The ship was helpless for the moment, and the master of the *Lizette* grasped his advantage.

Another moment and the brig was alongside the stranger. Grappling-irons were speedily hooked, and the buccaneers, led by the pirate captain himself, poured over the side, in a mad charge upon the decks of their victim. A wolf had overhauled an apparent sheep, to suddenly find another wolf in sheep's clothing. The battle of the wolves was on. . . .

Close behind Lafitte was the youth with the red hair, a pistol in each hand. Behind him rushed his comrades, with yells of triumph, shooting and slashing and cutting as if a crew of demons were let loose. At that moment, little did it matter to the men of the *Lizette* whether they faced friend or foe. When the wolf scents blood—

As Jean leaped down upon his enemy's deck he charged immediately toward the quarter-deck, anxious to meet Brouillard face to face, grudging the seconds that would intervene before he could reach him, for fear that another's bullet or blade would cheat him of his vengeance.

Before he could cover a quarter of the distance, however, came a surprise. Suddenly, with a shout that outdid their own, it seemed, from near-by hatchways and doors gushed a veritable mob of seamen, armed to the teeth, outnumbering the invaders three to one. These, taking advantage of their surprise, swept the pirates back to the ship's side by sheer weight of numbers.

Pandemonium reigned. . .

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Step by step Jean's men were forced back, fighting desperately.

Jean Lafitte had indeed caught a Tartar. His fellow wolf had fangs as well as himself. On every side his men were falling. Their intended victim had become a scourge. In the midst of his rage and disappointment he was cool enough to realize that he must regain his own deck or all was lost. It was impossible to reach Brouillard now. His vengeance had waited three years. It could wait another day.

At his side Red Jacques was fighting valiantly. Less than ten men were left with him, and these were attempting, between blows, to regain their ship. Springing to the side, preparatory to jumping into the waist of the *Lizette*, his shout pierced the tumult:

"Cut loose, men!"

Then he turned for a final stand, to defend the retreat of his followers. In another few moments all the ropes that held the *Lizette* in that fatal embrace with her enemy were quickly cut. The last surviving pirate, with the exception of Lafitte and one other, had reached safety.

Flinging his empty, smoking pistol and broken sword into the face of his enemies, Jean turned and leaped for the *Lizette*.

As he stood a brief moment on the rail, a musket-butt fell on his head and he dropped backward on to the ship's deck into oblivion.

The next moment the two vessels had drifted apart, the Black Fox's guns trained on the *Lizette*, fast crippling that gallant craft and turning her deck into a shambles. The loss of her foremast, however, made his own vessel unmanageable, and just at this con-

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venient time the lady in the moon veiled her face from the scene of bloodshed. The *Lizette* disappeared into the night, leaving her master in the hands of his enemies.

The howling of the wolfpack diminished and soon all was silent.

CHAPTER THE THIRD:

*In Which the Black Fox
Encounters an Old Acquaintance*

“GET UP!”

Jean, semi-conscious, seemed to hear the voice from a great distance; he could not, as yet, associate it with himself. Nor, in the same dim, unreal way, could he feel the kick that struck his side. Seemingly, he was oblivious to any pain in his body. The miniature hell in his head was occupying his whole, absorbed attention.

Suddenly a bucket of water was dashed over him. He regained his senses slowly, his first definite impression that of an acute, numbing pain in the back of his head. Attempting to lift it, he experienced such torture that he was forced to lie back, groaning. He heard retreating steps as of one ascending a ladder. Then a hatchway slammed and all was black again.

When his mind had cleared a little, he endeavored to understand his whereabouts. It was not long before he pieced out the details of the short disastrous fight—its ending—the sudden pain—oblivion. Where was he? Where was faithful Red Jacques? All about him was pitch blackness. Then he became conscious of the fact that his feet were wet. He smelled bilge water. That explained matters. He must be a prisoner, put in the hold for safe keeping. And then for the first time he realized that his feet were securely ironed.

Of a sudden, following the shuffling of feet overhead, a hatchway lifted, letting in a flood of sunlight

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that well-nigh blinded him. Despite the glare, however, he was able to note that he was lying on a heap of ropes and cordage with his feet in the water. A sailor was descending the ladder.

A moment later another followed. The first one unlocked the chains, and then they roughly dragged him up the ladder to the deck.

Again the glare of light dazzled him. Before he could accustom himself to his surroundings he was led stumbling across the deck and backed against a stanchion, to which the two seamen began to securely tie him. This duty satisfactorily completed, they fell back.

Jean looked about him with interest, eager to see Brouillard.

All around him, at a respectful distance, was a circle of faces—the hang-dog, devil-may-care physiognomies of the typical rover of the Caribbean. Sailor-like, he next glanced aloft. The foremast was still unrepaiied. The great ship was motionless on a placid sea, and the early morning sun was just beginning its lofty climb across the cloudless sky. He dropped his eyes back to his captors.

As he did so, the Black Fox stepped through the silent circle and paused before him, a stately figure in gaudy raiment, his black beard carefully curled and pomaded.

With an imperious gesture Brouillard motioned his followers away. In a moment the two, prisoner and captor, were alone, as far as they were concerned. For a long interval the latter stared at the helpless man, a curious expression in his eyes. His words were inevitable, bridging the years.

"So, Monsieur Lafitte," he drawled, "we meet again!"

Jean defiantly gave him back stare for stare, contemptuously silent.

"Why have you hunted me all these years?" suddenly demanded the other.

"To kill you!" answered Lafitte, simply, his voice redolent of hate.

The Black Fox did not laugh.

"Why?" he persisted.

"To avenge Lizette Fondac," said Jean.

Brouillard cursed expressively.

"Damn you!" he cried, "you know it was an accident, that!"

"But yes . . . I know. But I have followed you across the seas for another reason, Brouillard. You forget that we did not finish our little affair. And I had sworn to make you retract or kill you. Lizette is dead, therefore retraction is unnecessary—so I will kill you."

"I would not have retracted, however," said Brouillard, heavily. "You are a young fool. I told the truth about that wench."

"You lie!" cried Lafitte.

"*Parbleu!* But the gutter scum is impertinent!"

The younger man fairly writhed with the frenzy of his rage.

"Loosen me, coward," he cried, "and I will kill you with my own hands! Coward! Dog! Scoundrel!"

By way of answer the Black Fox cuffed him viciously across the mouth, seeing which, a group of his henchmen lounging on the opposite rail laughed.

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"You are afraid to face me man to man, cursed one!" panted Lafitte.

Brouillard laughed heartily.

"Fool that you are!" he cried, "I have no desire to kill you. You have insulted Gaston Brouillard—you have cursed him—you have given him the lie. For each of these things you should die a terrible death. Moreover, you have hunted *Le Renard Noir* . . . You have treacherously attacked him and killed many of his men. For that you should die a death of torture . . . you and all your followers . . . a death that only one of the Brotherhood could contrive. But the Black Fox has a far pleasanter fate in store for you, *mon brave!* Name of a name! Your lot shall be a living death, Jean Lafitte!"

Lafitte's lip curled contemptuously. He had regained his self-possession.

"Indeed!" he said. The insulting inflection of that one word seemed to madden Brouillard, who poured a storm of obscene invective on his head.

"From now on," he declared, grimly, when his passion had somewhat subsided, "you shall be my servant, my slave! I shall find ways of breaking your spirit as well as your back. You shall be at the beck and call of the lowliest of my men. The slightest disobedience will get you a hundred lashes from the 'cat.' The—"

Jean yawned.

"You bore me excessively, my friend," he interjected.

Brouillard stopped short, his face a panorama of conflicting emotions. Then he suddenly turned and called one of his followers.

"Bring the red-head!" he ordered, brusquely.

Lafitte stiffened, and followed the pirate out of sight with his eyes. Brouillard, watching him, grinned evilly.

"It may interest you to know, monsieur, that you are not our only guest."

"What do you mean?" sharply.

"There was a red-head . . ."

"Red Jacques!" exclaimed Jean.

". . . who did not escape," finished the Black Fox, grinning with enjoyment at sight of Lafitte's crest-fallen face.

"Well?" the latter demanded.

"Your young cockerel would not jump over the side when he saw you fall, but stood over your body and defended it with his cutlass. It was necessary to shoot him to get to you, which I deeply regret, because of his courage."

"He is dead?" with horror.

"Not yet!" was the laconic response. "He is only slightly wounded."

"Thank *le bon Dieu*!"

"I said 'not yet'!" went on Brouillard, smoothly.

"What do you mean?"

"*Vous verrez* . . . you shall see!"

As he spoke, the pirate reappeared on deck, pushing some one before him. It was Red Jacques, his auburn hair dishevelled, his face powder-grimed, and limping painfully. As he caught sight of Lafitte his face lighted up.

"*Mon capitaine!* I thought you were dead!"

"*Pauvre garçon!* Jean Lafitte thanks you for your loyalty. He will remember it."

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Red Jacques flushed with delight.

"I would die for you, *mon capitaine*," he said, simply, and halted, all confusion.

"I'll give you an opportunity," put in the Black Fox, urbanely. "Sancho, the rope!"

"If you harm him," cried Lafitte, "I will kill you! I swear it by Our Lady!"

Brouillard contemptuously ignored him and made a sign toward his henchman. That worthy, advancing toward Red Jacques, trailing a long rope, began to use its end to tie a tight noose around the lad's wrists. Evidently Red Jacques was not to be hung. . . .

Then it was that Lafitte noticed that the rope end was in reality part of one that hung from the cross-trees, high in the mast above. As he watched, fascinated, two seamen, at a signal from their captain, hauled away at the other end of the rope. With a sudden jerk Red Jacques was lifted from his feet and slowly swung aloft, his face pasty with fright.

"Courage!" shouted Lafitte. "If he harms you he shall pay for this!" As yet he could not fathom Brouillard's intentions.

Slowly the helpless youth was raised in the air until he swung aloft, above their heads, suspended only by his wrists from the cross-trees.

For a moment nothing happened. Then as the ship gave a slight roll the lad's body described an arc, swinging outward. The slightest movement of the ship swung him like a pendulum.

Fascinated, Jean saw the body of his comrade swaying far above his head. In horror he realized the dreadful vengeance Brouillard had planned. He was

to see, helpless to prevent, his comrade pounded to death against the mast. To every motion of the ship the swinging body responded. The victim's struggles were vain. They only added a more fiendish horror to the scene. As he swung, the lad spun like a top. And then with a thud that made Jean sick and dizzy his body struck the mast.

"You devil!" shrieked Lafitte, straining at his ropes. "Let him down!"

Brouillard laughed and cursed him. Again Red Jacques swung against the heavy mast, and screamed in anguish.

"Have you no pity?" cried Jean, perceiving the uselessness of his efforts to free himself. "Let him down. You're killing the lad!"

But Brouillard insanely laughed and cursed again. The members of his crew, hardened and calloused by years of crime, watched the sport with interest. They were no strangers to torture; they merely applauded their master for his new ingenious device.

Again and yet again the swaying body of the boy, swinging dizzily, smote against the mast, but now there were no cries from the helpless victim. Life had left his battered body.

Lafitte fainted.

A douche of water brought back his senses. He looked up.

Over his head in the bright sunshine swayed the body of his unfortunate comrade, swinging limply and unresistingly.

Lafitte fixed his burning eyes on those of the Black Fox, who waxed restless under their relentless gaze, and averted his own. He, too, had fallen silent, nor

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did he once look aloft. Finally he called two of his henchmen to take Lafitte back below. As they unlashd the latter from the stanchion, he spoke over their shoulders.

"Brouillard, you hell hound," said Jean steadily, "for to-day's work I shall deal you in kind. You will do well to kill me now, for if ever my turn shall come—"

He broke off abruptly, for he had vowed in his heart to flay Brouillard alive, strip him shrieking from his skin.

The Black Fox laughed unsteadily, and for the second time cuffed the unresisting Lafitte across the mouth, drawing a faint trickle of blood.

"From now on, *mon ami*," he sneered, "you'll wish you hadn't been born rather than to have crossed me. Away with him, Sancho! Bring him up again this evening for a hundred lashes," he added, as an afterthought. "We shall have more sport."

A minute later Jean was back in the hold. All day he lay there, suffering acutely from thirst and the heat, and not a little from hunger. But no one came.

It was almost evening when he heard a loud scuffling of running feet above his head, and a confusion of raucous voices. Evidently something of moment was happening. Exactly a quarter of an hour later he heard the sudden detonating explosion of one of the ship's guns above him. It was followed by another. Then there was a roar as though from a broadside. And answering guns.

The Black Fox was attacked!

For what seemed like ages he lay there helpless,

listening to the battle, torn with anxiety. Had the *Lizette* returned to rescue him? But that was doubtful, for he judged that the *Lizette* was badly crippled. Then the newcomer could only be a man-o'-war, whether French, British, or Spanish made no difference whatsoever. For even if he were found a prisoner of the Black Fox's, he, too, was a pirate, and as such would be summarily hanged.

Therefore, with mingled feelings of anxiety, hope, and rage engendered by the possible deferring of his vengeance, he lay chafing in the hot, noisome hold.

Finally there was a cessation of gun-fire, a confusion of pistol-shots, yells, and running feet above told him that the Black Fox was being boarded. Then the tumult died down, but the thumping, racing feet told its own story.

Suddenly the hatchway opened, revealing a man's shoulders silhouetted against the twilight sky.

"Don Juan!" came a voice. "Are you there, Don Juan?"

Lafitte's heart bounded joyously.

"Ramon!" he exclaimed. The impossible had happened. The *Lizette* had come to his rescue. A pæan of joy sang in his brain.

But there was a greater surprise yet awaiting him on the deck above. As he emerged from the hatchway, Pierre Dominique Lafitte rushed toward him and, sweeping him in his arms, gave him a bear-like hug.

Came explanations. The *Lizette* had returned to the island rendezvous sometime during the night, bringing news of the catastrophe. The elder Lafitte had immediately hurried his party on board, spent a

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few hours in making necessary repairs, and set sail for the crippled vessel of the Black Fox. On finding the latter, there had been a short fight, the superior condition of the *Lizette*, and the fresh additions to her crew, making victory possible.

"And Brouillard?" demanded Jean.

Brouillard, said Pierre, had been taken prisoner, as had the majority of his men. Should they immediately hang him? And them?

"Name of a name, no!" cried Jean. He proceeded to tell Pierre Dominique of the death of Red Jacques, and pointed out his body still swinging above them. Orders were immediately given to lower the body and prepare it for a proper burial at sea. Then Jean Lafitte sent for Brouillard and had his shackles removed.

"Brouillard," said he, "I swore to kill you, and I will do it. But I will give you a chance for your life, because I want to have the pleasure of killing you with my own hand, as I promised you. Ramon, give him a sword."

Although astonished by the offer, the Black Fox snatched the blade with alacrity and placed himself in a posture of defense. Taking up another sword, Jean placed himself on guard. The duel commenced.

The men of the *Lizette* gathered about them in a wide circle, several of them holding up lanterns, to give better light. Not a sound was to be heard but the clashing and scraping of the steel and the quick footsteps of the furious pair.

Brouillard fought cautiously, ever on the defensive, knowing well that his life was at stake. Parrying and

lunging, thrusting and feinting, they circled round the little space, contesting every inch of ground. On and on they fought, their blades flashing in the lantern-light like living streaks of silver; in *carte* and *tierce*, darting and twisting.

As the Black Fox fought, he realized, perhaps for the first time in his life, what it meant to face a man who was full of the deadly determination to kill him, the fury of whose attack spoke of concentrated rage and hate that could only find an outlet through the heart of his opponent.

Fear, that most demoralizing of emotions, entered his soul, and this it was, perhaps, that hastened the end.

At last came the moment when Jean's blade found the brief breach in Brouillard's guard, and he lunged forward with all his strength. The Black Fox dropped his arm abruptly; his sword clattered to the deck as he clutched at his side.

For a brief moment there was a pregnant pause. Then the Black Fox raised his eyes to the passion-marked face of Lafitte, who was pointing toward his sword on the deck.

What he saw written there must have terrified him, for suddenly he turned and broke through the circle of rovers. Before anyone could stop him, or even think of stopping him, he literally threw himself over the bulwarks. There was a splash, and a body that rose for a moment in the gentle swell of the phosphorescent waters. And then their eyes fastened on a triangular black fin which was darting straight for the swimming man. He, too, caught sight of it, for, screaming with terror, he began to swim furiously

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toward the ship. The fin suddenly disappeared. A moment later there was a choking cry and the Black Fox suddenly disappeared beneath the surface of the Caribbean.

Lizette Fondac and Red Jacques were avenged.

BOOK ONE

Ambition

" . . . You think me ambitious, brother. You are wrong. Ambition is but the pursuit of mirages . . . the big things of to-day are but the stepping-stones to the bigger things of to-morrow . . . Ambition is desire—and desire is will . . . that is unconquerable. . . ."

—JEAN LAFITTE.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH:

*Wherein a Gentleman
Blacksmith Arrives upon
the Scene*

“**W**HO is Jean Lafitte?” District-Attorney Grymes looked at his guest in surprise. Edward Marshall, a stoop-shouldered, fastidiously dressed man, nodded.

“Exactly. I’ve only been in your blessed city two short days, and yet all I hear is ‘Jean Lafitte’ . . . ‘Jean Lafitte’ !”

John R. Grymes, district attorney of New Orleans and former member of the Virginia bar, laughed. He was a handsome man of middle age, with a leonine head, a splendid physique, and the unmistakable stamp of aristocrat on every bold feature. There were wrinkles about his eyes, however, and the observant spectator might have detected a few, although a very few, signs of dissipation.

“First of all, Lafitte, or rather, the Lafittes, are blacksmiths.”

“I know that much !”

“Well, they are what might be called ‘gentlemen blacksmiths.’ They are both men of unusual education and refinement, and prominent in business here.”

“So I gathered . . . but what is all this talk about them?”

“Well, I suppose I’ll have to begin at the beginning. Here, Rappahannock, bring some of that claret from bin four.”

Rappahannock, the butler, obeyed, disappearing in-

side the house. The district attorney and his guest were sitting on the wide, white-columned veranda, of a brick Colonial country home. The roof, of red-painted cypress, was to be seen from the road, peeping out of a grove of ancient magnolias, its airy belvedere rising jauntily above the trees. Red-brick walks wound in and out the grounds, and a long winding drive swept down to the tall, brick-pillared gates. Jasmine and crimson-hued oleanders bloomed in profusion, together with crisp boughs of pomegranates, orange trees, and massed thickets of acacia. It was a typical Louisianian home with a touch of Colonial Virginia.

This was the stirring year of 1810, the year ending that memorable decade when the recently established United States government was the most unpopular institution in Louisiana; when the aristocratic Creoles, both French and Spanish, were still voicing their emphatic protests against such hateful innovations as American dances, trial by jury, politics, anti-smuggling laws, and the printing of the Governor's proclamation in English! It was the beginning of the end of French social domination in the Mississippi Valley, the state of Louisiana . . . and that "Little Paris" of the Creoles, New Orleans.

And it is here that we meet Jean Lafitte again.

"To begin," said Grymes, the claret having been brought, "the Lafittes, gentlemen blacksmiths, are men of means, of some social position; capitalists. They are French, of course. . . . It is said that they come from the south of France, for they speak with that accent peculiar to natives of the Garonne region. I am not sure of this, but it makes no difference. To get to the subject, however, which you asked me about

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. . . listen: I'll have to quote you a little history, Marshall; I'll try not to bore you.

"No doubt you've heard about the smugglers, or pirates, hereabouts? Yes? As you know, the Gulf of Mexico has always been a breeding-place for pirates, buccaneers of the old type. Well, in recent years, piracy has gradually died out. To be sure, there is still some lawlessness in the Caribbean, but the pirates of years back—Morgan, Kidd, and the rest of their ilk—are extinct."

"I don't know about that, Grymes. Up in New York we still get reports of looted vessels, outrages of all kinds."

"Well, perhaps so, but those are isolated cases. I certainly hope so, anyway. But there is very little prey for an ambitious buccaneer these days. The celebrated treasure cities of South America are no more and the only treasure ships that sail these days are too strong to fear pirates."

"Yes, but what's all this talk—"

"Just a moment, I'm coming to that. As I said, there is not much booty lying around nowadays to cause a self-respecting pirate to risk his neck. But these waters, the Gulf in particular, still offer many opportunities of aggrandizement for enterprising nomads of the sea. And personally, Marshall, I think that the gentlemen of fortune of to-day, instead of seeking gold, pieces of eight, and all that sort of thing, deal in human booty! Instead of attacking treasure galleons they raid slave ships! They traffic in black ivory.

"But first, let me refresh your memory a little. Two years ago, in January, 1808, I believe, Congress

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passed a law prohibiting the further importation of slaves into this country."

Marshall showed interest.

"I remember that fool law well," he said, "and for a good reason. It made me lose ten thousand dollars."

Grymes nodded.

"Well, we were all hard hit," he remarked, "but especially our section of the country, the South. It's no use telling you that the Southern States have to rely on slave labor, solely. You know all that. But you cannot know how hard Louisiana is hit, because this is a newly acquired territory and we are deprived of our only source of labor. At any rate, due to the lack of labor, our crops rotted and business came practically to a standstill."

Marshall grunted.

"It's the same thing all over the country."

"But not as bad as here," added Grymes, quickly, "for that same year the price of slaves rose to a thousand dollars a head! In Cuba, to the south of us, they could be gotten for three hundred dollars apiece. Therefore, the result was—"

"That they went to Cuba to get them—"

"—And smuggled them in—exactly! That's how the practice of slave-smuggling started. The first smugglers, men of doubtful antecedents, for the most part, bought their slaves in Cuba and, sailing across the Gulf, landed them in out-of-the-way harbors on our coast, from where they were marched overland to the auction markets of Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

"It's curious, Marshall, but these Creoles seem to

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be born smugglers. Smuggling, it appears, has long been almost an acknowledged part of Louisiana's commerce. It flourished mostly, I believe, in the old Spanish and French colonial days, and when Napoleon sold us this territory it had become such a profitable business that the Creoles, for the most part, who bear our government no love, as you know, have continued to defy the law. Indeed, they seem to take pleasure in doing so.

"I suppose you also know that for years New Orleans has been a noted spot for *contrabandistas* of many kinds, together with refugees from San Domingo and revolutionists from South American republics. And there has been a good trade carried on between our merchants and the smugglers.

"Naturally, at the advent of the law and its resulting condition the practice of smuggling slaves was born and developed. Place a ban upon anything for which there is a public demand and you create law-breakers. However, a new class of people have entered into the smuggling trade. It is said that many of the best people in New Orleans, men of wealth and social position, merchants, planters, bankers, and politicians, are all connected with this traffic in slaves. Incredible as it may seem, it is nevertheless true that the Lafittes, who are known to be intimately connected with it, move in excellent Creole circles.

"In the last year, however, the smuggling business has changed its aspect, and that in a very drastic manner.

"These smuggling gentlemen soon realized that the legitimate slavers carried small, poorly armed crews, and as swiftly decided that it would be more profit-

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able to take this—er—black ivory from the slavers by force, rather than purchase it in Havana. They acted accordingly.

“Consequently the smugglers have become out-and-out pirates and are at present conducting an exceedingly prosperous business in captured cargoes. Anyway, despite the combined efforts of British, French, and our own warships, the waters of the Gulf of Mexico to-day have become a dangerous thoroughfare for commerce of any sort, for the ‘black ivory’ buccaneers make no discrimination as to booty.”

Marshall yawned delicately and sipped his claret.

“But where does Lafitte come in?” he asked. “For the life of me—”

“This is where Lafitte comes in. As you may know, the smithy of the Lafitte brothers is on the corner of Bourbon and St. Philippe streets—a large, barn-like building occupied by a good many slaves; real black-smiths, who toil at the forges.

“What supplies the pirates cannot get from captured ships they get in New Orleans. It is a matter of common knowledge that they have purchased chains and caufles used in ‘black ivory’ from the Lafitte smithy. The Lafittes have grown to be popular with the smuggler-buccaneers. Jean and Pierre Dominique Lafitte, who are, by the way, exceptionally shrewd business men, are their chief agents and bankers. This is common knowledge, as I said before.

“And the Lafitte smithy is, therefore, a sort of clearing house for many questionable transactions.

“Jean Lafitte, in particular, is a very remarkable man, in my estimation. He has, as has been proved, a rare executive ability, coupled with a genius for or-

ganization and, what is more, a magnificent contempt for the law that transcends even that of his neighbors. That is one of the reasons for his popularity with the Creoles, perhaps.

"His success in managing the affairs of the buccaneers, in which his usefulness to them has become a necessity, so I understand, has obtained for him a complete control over their affairs and, what is more astonishing, themselves. That alone demonstrates the force of his personality. I, myself, will vouch for the latter. He has the most charming manners and magnetic personality of any man I have met, and I have met quite a few.

"This is what you are hearing so much of, about Jean Lafitte. That is the story of his ascendancy over the pirates. Of course, all of this was not done in a day, or a month. He had first to unite their many rival interests, compose their differences, and form them into an organization which pools its varied resources for the good of the whole. At least, that is what is said of him. The future will tell. But if it is true, then, in my opinion, Jean Lafitte is a genius, for no one but a genius could succeed in such an apparently impossible undertaking, and no mind but that of a genius could have given birth to such a colossal conception!"

He paused. Marshall seemed infected with Grymes's enthusiasm.

"This Lafitte must be a wonderful man, indeed," he said, "but you have forgotten to tell me one thing . . . what, or where, is Barataria?"

Grymes looked up eagerly.

"I had forgotten! Barataria, or rather, Grande

Terre, is the headquarters of these pirates. That is how they get their name of 'Baratarians.' All operations of this magnitude demanded a base of operations, and these buccaneers established one at Barataria.

"Barataria Bay, itself, is a name that is applied to all of the Gulf coast of Louisiana from the mouth of the Mississippi to the Bayou La Fourche, a distance of about fifty miles. The island of Grande Terre, their headquarters proper, screens this bay from the Gulf, with which it is connected by a deep and narrow channel. The trees of this island, you see, are high enough to easily hide the masts of the ships of these slave-raiders from any hostile warship cruising outside, and, in my estimation, not a better rendezvous for their purpose could be found anywhere in the Gulf!

"Between the Mississippi and the Bayou, there is an intricate network of navigable channels that extends almost to this city. I am not familiar with it myself, and, really, no one is but these buccaneers. This makes their headquarters all the more desirable, as it gives them what might be called a back-stairs connection with New Orleans. It might also be termed a direct line of communication between the wholesale and retail markets of this rapidly developing trade. Indeed, it has come to the pass that this combination of which of course the brain is Lafitte, really controls the rise and fall of slave prices, and a few other commodities, in the Mississippi Valley.

"Do you wonder why the name of Jean Lafitte is on every lip?"

Marshall looked thoughtful.

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"I understand, now. And I suppose every one is wondering what he will do next."

"Exactly. But here, Marshall, I know I have bored you with my long talk."

"Not at all. It is highly interesting. I would like to meet this Lafitte, but I suppose it is impossible, for I must return to New York to-morrow. By the way, Grymes, on my way back, I believe I will stop over in Philadelphia and visit your charming daughter. She is at school there, is she not?"

The district attorney nodded, his eyes suddenly tender.

"Yes, Virginia is attending Miss Borden's school for young ladies, and was quite a belle, I am told, at the Assembly Ball. I shall give you a letter to her if you will be so kind as to take it. I can hardly wait until she comes down here. She's never been here, you know."

Marshall answered perfunctorily. He was mentally wondering what Jean Lafitte was going to do next.

But for that matter, Marshall was one of many.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH:

*How Jean Lafitte Tells of
His Ambition, and Incidentally
Makes a Change of Residence*

“**A**ND so, *mes amis*,” said Lafitte, slowly, “I have decided to go to Grande Terre.”

For a long moment there was a strange silence. His companions, grouped about the long, paper-littered table, were evidently very much surprised and perturbed at his simple statement. At the foot, Pierre Dominique Lafitte, a gallant figure in fashionable garments, stroked his imperial thoughtfully, but made no comment. A close observer, however, would have noticed that he was keenly studying the expressions of the other members of this strange company.

“W’at you mean?” asked one, a curious inflection in his voice. Like the majority of his companions, he was a seafaring man, but, unlike the others, he was not a pure Caucasian. Grambo—no one knew him by any other name—was a quadroon. One of the most disreputable smugglers in the Gulf, he was also one of the leading spirits of the Baratarian colony.

“Just what I said,” answered Lafitte, “I have decided to go to Grande Terre.”

“Why?”

Jean looked at the quadroon with a well-simulated surprise. “Because I think it necessary that I go there,” he said, coolly. “You see, my dear Grambo, hitherto I have attended to the business at this end. Now I have decided that it would be wise for me to

run over to our base of operations and look after things."

"Eet is nod necessaire dat you go dere," hastily put in Grambo, frowning. "We shall send you de blac' ivree heah. We don't need you dere."

"And since when have you taken it upon yourself to tell me my duty, m'sieu?" demanded the Frenchman, haughtily.

"I dell you no'ting. I onlee say dat eet is not necessaire foah you to go dere. W'y do you weesh to go?" There was a peculiar look in his shifty eyes, a note of insolence in his voice.

Pierre Dominique, the peacemaker, knew that Grambo was very influential among a large number of the smaller fry of smugglers, who feared him for his well-known, bullying nature, yet admired him for his daring and the vague mystery that surrounded many of his ventures. It was whispered of him that he had served his apprenticeship in shady deeds in the West Indies, the hotbed of piracy.

"What's up, Jean?" he asked, quietly. "Why this sudden determination?"

"I have decided that it is for our best interests that I go to Grande Terre—for a while."

"To—stay?" asked Grambo, quietly, although seething inwardly, as Lafitte well knew.

"I believe so. Here are my intentions: I shall go to Barataria to superintend the work—"

"W'at work?" asked Grambo, genuinely surprised. He could not associate actual work—even the superintendence of manual labor—with the immaculate, impeccable Frenchman. Lafitte was the brain of the organization, the man behind the smuggling on the

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Gulf, who furnished the necessary funds, planned the infinitely clever coups, and directed the chief operations of the work in general—but who never soiled his hands with the contact of actual sweat and blood. Grambo was truly surprised.

"First of all," said Lafitte, "it will hardly be necessary to send your goods to New Orleans in the future."

"What do you mean?"

"All goods—particularly black ivory—shall be brought directly to Grande Terre, and unloaded there."

"But what is your object in this strange proceeding?" asked Pierre Dominique. "Why all the extra trouble?"

"It will not be extra trouble at all. Grande Terre is to be our headquarters in the future. Our base of supplies."

"Bud I do nod understand," remarked another. "Why nod breeng dem direc' to New Orleans? Heah is de market. Eet is onlee heah dat we gan sell dem."

"Not at all," countered Lafitte. "We can sell them just as well—and as profitably—at Grande Terre."

"Bud dere is no one to buy, dere! To sell, we muz 'ave customers. Dere muz be a market!"

"Exactly. We will create a market."

"*Comment?*"

"Simple enough. The planters need slaves badly enough to come all the way to Grande Terre for them. Let them do so. Why should we go to all the trouble of bringing them here?" demanded Lafitte.

For a moment they stared at him, turning the new idea over and over in their minds. Lafitte went on.

"It is absurdly simple. We shall erect warehouses,

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slave stockades, and living quarters at Barataria, and mount some guns, for protection. Then we can bring our black ivory there, place them in our own stockades, and sell them when we please, for what we please, instead of selling them to dealers here for what they want to pay us. There is money in this business, *mes amis*, if it is managed right."

"*C'est vrai*—'tis true!" murmured Pocquelin, the ship owner.

"And, moreover, we can set our own prices on them and can auction them off right there. It will save us both time and trouble, not to say being much safer, and will fill our pockets in the bargain. What do you say?" His companions, with the exception of Pierre and the taciturn Grambo, applauded heartily. Pierre was silent, reserving his opinions and questions for a later time. The quadroom, however, was silent because he realized that Lafitte was right, and was piqued because he could not find fault with his plans.

"Therefore," continued Jean, "I will leave for Grande Terre at dawn. Pierre shall remain here, to act in my absence. As for Barataria, *messieurs*, I prophesy that it will become the largest market in the Mississippi Valley. Mark my words! In time we shall control the 'black ivory' trade of the entire Gulf!"

The response was enthusiastic. Jean smiled. He invariably had his way with punctilious Creole aristocrat and uncouth smuggler. His magnetic, forceful personality always triumphed.

"As for yourself, Monsieur Grambo," remarked the younger Lafitte, "since you have such a deep-rooted prejudice against my visiting your island, sup-

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pose you remain in New Orleans for a few weeks? You need the rest, I'm sure."

All were silent, instinctively realizing that something was in the air.

"Grambo will go to Gran' Terre, *aussi*," growled that gentleman, half-defiantly; "he has naught to do een New Orleans!"

Jean laughed softly.

"Go by all means, *mon bon ami*! After all, our town air may not be so good for your health. Yes, go. But remember, Grambo"—his voice hardened, almost imperceptibly—"you go to Grande Terre . . . *oui*. But only because I permit you to go. Because it is my wish," he added, with magnificent condescension in his voice.

Grambo writhed, unable to speak coherently for his very rage. Pierre Dominique looked appealingly at his dominating brother. He could not know that Jean was deliberately attempting to make a display of his authority to Grambo because it was necessary to the furtherance of one of his many plans.

"Grambo weel do w'at 'e dam' weesh!" cried the Baratarian, at last.

"*Très bien*," replied Lafitte, tranquilly, too tranquilly, one thought. "Pierre, you may return that five thousand dollars I got from our bankers to-day. Take it to Toulouse Street at once. But wait! Perhaps some of these gentlemen here might be able to use that sum on a venture somewhat like that planned by *notre ami* . . . Monsieur Grambo. No? Well, keep it awhile. There are many of our privateer friends who might—"

"Eet ees again 'privateer'!" cried Grambo, jeer-

ingly. "Murszhur Lafitte, I—Grambo—am a pirate! Nod a *damné* privateer! Bah! W'at do I cayeh who know? To hell wit' poleez! To hell wit' de law! I—Grambo—"

"—Am a damn fool!" finished Pierre, under his breath, as he filled his pipe. Jean broke in.

"As you wish, monsieur, as you wish! For my part you can be pirate, robber, cutthroat, murderer, thief, or mere scoundrel! But as for me and these gentlemen, I would have you understand . . . we are privateers, business men, with letters of marque."

"Letters of marque?"

"Yes. I have procured regularly authorized letters of marque from the Republic of Carthagera, to wage warfare on Spanish commerce. Of course, we can use our own discretion as to others. Anyone can make a mistake, you know."

They were suddenly silent on receipt of this bit of intelligence. Letters of marque would be of great service to them. At that date, and for many years previous, the practice of privateering was merely a system of open piracy with legal sanction. Indeed, all privateering might have been given that definition.

"Privateers" and "pirates" were, in fact, almost convertible terms. Grambo's scorn of Lafitte's polite euphemism may easily be understood. The system of privateering, indeed, invariably proved a monstrous aggravation of the evils of war, although not one spark of patriotism animated either owners or crew. Their sole object was to make money by plunder. The owners of privateers were not honorable or reputable citizens as a rule, yet at this period, and especially in this locality where smuggling was the vogue, many of

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Louisiana's best-known citizens were indirectly connected with it.

And the practice was not strictly confined to American waters. It was authorized by great European nations, and in this very same year, while the Lafittes were organizing the "black ivory" trade, much outright piracy in the guise of honorable warfare was going on in the English Channel.

Therefore, the little group of Louisianians gathered in the room above the Lafitte smithy were more than a little satisfied to learn that Lafitte had secured letters of marque from Carthage.

After a little more discussion the visitors left without Grambo having said anything more. The two brothers were alone.

Pierre Dominique broke the silence.

"Jean," he said, staring into the fireplace, "I mistrust Grambo. Do you think it wise to antagonize him?"

"Perhaps not."

"You had better keep on your guard, *mon frère*."

"Don't worry, Pierre. I am prepared."

"*Comment?*"

"I have not been idle all these months, my brother. I saw this day approaching. For almost six months I have been recruiting forces, selecting men. Ah, you look surprised! I will explain. As you know, New Orleans is filled with men ready for any sort of business. You know what I mean?"

Pierre nodded soberly. He well knew that the streets, wharves, and low dives were swarming with soldiers of fortune; swaggering adventurers from all over America; fiery revolutionists from South Amer-

ica; fugitives from Santo Domingo and Mexico; men ripe for any sort of dare-deviltry, any adventure, no matter how dangerous; men ready to sell their lives for gold.

"I have visited the saloons, the levees, the river—boats—everywhere!" went on Lafitte, "picking a man here, a man there. And now, I flatter myself, I have the finest band of rascals in the Gulf. And I have tested them. I can rely on them."

Pierre looked puzzled. "But, Jean, I do not see—I do not understand. What will you do with them? Will you fit out more ships? If so, there are good crews in abundance, and assuredly there are far better sailors than these roaming adventurers you speak of."

"*C'est vrai*. But I know all that, my brother," laughed Jean. "You are dull to-night, indeed! I will explain, however. I do not want sailors; I want fighters!"

"Fighters?"

"*Naturellement!* Do you think I am fool enough to trust myself alone at Grande Terre, to be at the mercy of such fools as Grambo? Most assuredly not! When I go to Grande Terre to-morrow I go with a suitable escort, my brother. Men who will obey Jean Lafitte and no one but Jean Lafitte! Without them to overawe the trouble-makers, and to keep the peace, incidentally, how do you think I will be able to weld together our associates, with their many differences and jealousies? We must work as a whole, not individually. I know these people well, Pierre—very well. I have not studied them for nothing.

"There is naught that so impresses them as display

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of force—of power. The more the pomp and the haughtier the bearing, the better they like it. You should realize that most of our men are not of this democratic, inquisitive type, such as are these Americans from the north. The Americans distrust pomp and are suspicious of power, but our Creoles and Spaniards are Europeans at heart, with the same European traditions and ideas, to a large extent.

"They may scoff at power—at the high places—but I notice they scramble for those seats of the mighty if but given the opportunity. My 'Myrmidons'—I have dubbed them 'Myrmidons,' Pierre—shall serve many purposes.

"They shall keep order for me at Grande Terre, thus assisting in quickening our business expansion projects. They shall keep for me the balance of power at Barataria, so that I may carry out my plans, unhindered by insurgents and dissentients. They shall provide the pomp and *éclat* necessary to dazzle, impress, and overawe these smugglers. And, lastly, they shall serve to uphold the prestige and power of Jean Lafitte personally—so that at Barataria his word shall be law! Only thus can be built a strong—"

"Monarchy!" finished Pierre Dominique, soberly, his eyes on Jean's face. "*Ma foi!* But you are ambitious, brother mine! In other words, your gallant swashbucklers shall raise you on their swords to a throne, if but a small one!"

Lafitte stared into the dying fire, whose last flickering embers threw his tall figure into shapely relief against the wall. His face, however, was in shadow.

"Speaking of monarchies—kingdoms—Pierre, are those impossible? The little Corsican, unknown to

the world but ten short years ago, is now Emperor of France! The obscure cadet of an Italian province is now our king!"

"Europe is not America, Jean. What can happen there cannot happen here. The European is so accustomed to the idea of monarchies and empires that no other form of government seems possible to him. Both our ancestors and our European contemporaries have been, and still are, unconsciously governed by tradition. The idea of the divine right of kings is as indelibly stamped in their hearts as is their belief that there is a deity in heaven. And, for them, it is as it should be. Another form of government would be impossible for them . . . and is improbable.

"There is the saying, '*si Dieu n' existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer.*' And it is true. If God did not exist it *would* be necessary to invent him. So with monarchies. If they should suddenly cease to exist, it would be necessary to invent new monarchical forms of government—in Europe! But not in America, Jean—not in America! You wish to establish a monarchy? In Europe, yes! It might be possible. But in America, no!"

Jean laughed lightly.

"What of Toussaint L'Ouverture? Did he not make himself dictator of Santo Domingo but a few short years ago?"

"The 'Black Napoleon'? *Ma foi*, Jean, but you have much to learn! The conditions favored him. And, in any event, such things happen but once in an age!"

"What can happen once can happen again! Yet—"

"'Yet'! That's exactly the point. *Yet* it won't

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happen again, and certainly not here—in America! You talk nonsense, Jean. Did not Aaron Burr, that talented American, dream of a great western empire—and did he not dream in vain? And *he* was a really great man, a man of eminence, of influence. Have you already forgotten how he came here to New Orleans several short years ago with their General Wilkinson? And how he failed? Aaron Burr still lives, but his star has set forever.

“Kingdoms? There will be no more kingdoms in America, Jean. When Washington refused the title of king, he sounded the death-knell of any future attempt to set up a monarchy in America, or on this continent! Where is Burr to-day? Where is the Dictator of Santo Domingo? Where—”

Lafitte laughed and put his hand on his brother's shoulder.

“You are right, Pierre, as usual, but you have misunderstood me. I have no intention whatsoever of attempting to establish a miniature sovereignty or independent state.”

Pierre Dominique looked both exasperated and perplexed.

“Then why do you crave this personal power? Why do you wish to reign supreme at Grande Terre?” he demanded, bluntly.

Jean Lafitte smiled grimly. His black eyes flashed.

“You still do not understand, Pierre? I am not fool enough to dream of a monarchy, as you suggest. As you say, monarchies are only for Europe, and I know that well enough. But I *do* intend, and I will succeed, in making myself the economic dictator of the Mississippi Valley! The privateer of Barataria shall

set the price of slaves, and, mayhap, other commodities, in this region. Opportunity is at our door. We shall win our desire, *not* by the right of the stronger—but—by the right of the wiser. . . . You understand me?" he cried, enthusiastically.

Pierre looked at his brother thoughtfully. "*Mais oui.* But that is an unusual doctrine."

"All unused doctrines are unusual."

"But your idea has—possibilities. It's not exactly impossible."

"Possibilities?" Jean laughed exultantly. "Impossible? *Impossible n'est pas un mot français!*"

Pierre did not answer. Jean kicked idly at the dying embers.

"You wish to be—you are—*un chevalier d'industrie!*" accused Pierre, suddenly.

"A knight of industry, yes. But not a swindler—a sharper. Pierre, this is an age of money—a mercenary age."

"That may be said of every age in history," said Pierre Lafitte.

"Perhaps. But the time is not far off when trade will influence both politics and society. And mayhap religion. Cannot money buy almost anything? Cannot it buy legislators, women, pleasure, power?"

As he spoke, the vesper bells of the convent of the Ursulines were heard in the distance, their silvery melodies faintly borne to them by the Gulf breeze. At the sound a new thought entered Lafitte's head.

"—And perhaps our holy men and women?" he added, ingenuously.

"You speak blasphemy!" cried Pierre, furtively crossing himself. The elder Lafitte was not greatly

religious, but was superstitious to a marked degree. He well knew that Jean listened to the religious talk of the priests and pious Catholics with a cynical intolerance, and privately deplored the fact. Like most French boys, the Lafittes were, in both their juvenescence and adolescence, ardent supporters of Holy Church. But since reaching manhood all had changed—in the case of Jean, particularly.

Jean, who had sorrowed so for his lost Lizette, musing and pondering on the insignificance of the trivialities of life, his eyes on the immovable stars, all alone in the infinite stillnesses of the night, during that period of his career in the Caribbean, had gradually and almost unconsciously come to doubt the existence of a deity, and to lose what moderate respect he had ever possessed for his personal religion. For, he argued within himself, if a beneficent, kind, and all-potent power did exist, why had it allowed his Lizette to die, and himself to live on, with a memory-fraught future?

For this, and similar reasons, partly due to his temporary companionship and intercourse with the lawless, creedless free-booters of the Caribbean, he had lost practically whatever faith he had ever possessed, and which was never totally regained, even when he had partly forgotten his boyhood sweetheart and had taken a creditable place in cultured society. A certain acquaintance had once called him "*un libre-penseur*"—a free-thinker.

Lafitte was wise, however, and well knew that it would be rather embarrassing, while in Creole circles, to be religionless, to all outward appearance, so, externally, at least, he again became a pious, dutiful son

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of Mother Church, much to the edification of his ecclesiastical contemporaries and the approval of his Creole friends. It cost him nothing, and his convictions were his own.

If the teachings of the priests were true, then by conformity to the exactions of the Church his future existence was safeguarded. If they were untrue, as he half suspected, he would enter the Great Vacuum with curiosity, but not fear, to face what there was to be faced with the courage of a true Lafitte, a true gentleman, and a true Frenchman. He would doubtless meet others. . . .

Such was Jean Lafitte, such his ideas about the great scheme of things . . . a man with that perfect poise which is the essence of individuality, with unusual imagination and vision; a creature of intuitive impulse, and one whose keen sense of honor was primarily a peculiar sportsmanship whose chief ingredients were a love of fair play, an acute sense of justice, and the love of excitement that permeates every man of action.

And it was just such a man who was to assist in molding the destinies of a great nation.

Such men are not types, nor yet like one another. Most emphatically not.

Such men are *individuals*. And rarities.

"Blasphemy?" sighed Jean, guilelessly. "*Non, non, mon frère*. I speak but the truth." He laughed cynically.

"You think me ambitious, brother. You are wrong. Ambition is but the pursuit of mirages; the big things of to-day are but the stepping-stones to the bigger things of to-morrow. Say, rather, Destiny. Yes, that is the word. Destiny. I am inclined to be-

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lieve that I am somewhat of a fatalist, like these Easterns one reads about." He paused. "But you may be right, at that. Ambition is desire—and desire is will . . . that is unconquerable. I believe I have that," he mused.

Pierre Dominique looked pained.

"More blasphemy!" he muttered, ignoring Jean's latter remarks, which, truth to tell, he did not understand.

Jean laughed unpleasantly, catching at the other's train of thought, with swift insight.

"Ah, Pierre, fear not for my immortal soul. I am as devout a Catholic as yourself. I merely spoke my thoughts. You should ignore them. I am but a pirate, after all, *n'est-ce-pas, mon Pierre?* And it is well known that a gentleman of piratical tendencies should profess no religion. It would be inconsistent. Pardon my speech, brother, if it offends you. You well know I am not one of these canting hypocrites who pretend great piety, nor yet am I like these superstitious peons whose only possessions are a wealth of vermin and an unshakable faith in the holy saints!"

He laughed mirthlessly. Pierre Dominique endeavored to look stern, but without success.

"But you should not speak so of—of the servants of Holy Church, my brother. Nor yet should you take pride in the fact that you once were—a pirate. Rather, you should repent."

"Perhaps. But I cannot but notice, Sir Champion, that L'Abbe Constantin did not refuse my pair of golden candlesticks last Michaelmas. Nor did the Mother Superior of the Ursulines refuse my costly altar cloth. On the contrary, they both gave me their

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blessing as a true son of Mother Church . . . me, the pirate . . . the smuggler!" There was a trace of bitterness in his voice.

But Pierre Dominique did not answer.

For a long while neither spoke, each buried in his own thoughts, as they stared into the dying fire.

The last ember sputtered out.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH:

*In which Grambo, the Quadroon,
Is Indiscreet, and
Suffers Thereby*

GRAMBO scowled.

"I do nod trus' him, I tell you! He ees nod betteh dan annybody else!"

"I knowce it, bud who gan mague an'teen?"

"I'd lag to cud hiz troad! De—"

"Hush! Heah come won af hiz boolies!"

"De *canaille!*"

In silence the two Baratarians, Grambo, the quadroon, and Manuel Espinosa, a Spanish Creole, watched the approach of a gayly dressed swashbuckler, who, with lofty contempt apparent in every gesture, passed them quickly.

Grambo snarled.

"Señor Grambo," said the other, "Manuel Espinosa, too, would lag to go some nigh' and cut-a hiz heart ou'—bud eet is impossible!"

Grambo nodded gloomily.

"*Oui*, señor. Bud wad gan won do? Dad dam' Lafette haz alread' bin heah a mont', an' wa'd a zchance' I tol' you so, did I nod? When I ask 'im een New Orleans foah why he come to Gran' Terre, he anseh, 'to take charge.' An' dad ees w'at he haz done, de *diable!*"

"Can nodin' be done?"

"I gan keel-a heem!"

"W'at do de oders say?" he asked.

"De oders?" Grambo cursed. "Dey are all wit'

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heem! No soonch do he arrife dan day all run to heem lak a flo'k of ship. From dad day when he stip on Gran' Terre he iz '*le bosse*'! Dad oz w'at day all call heem—'*bosse*.' I go to dem—to Millar', to Pascoval, to Mazara, 'Kenzie—dey are all crezzie! Dey sayce, 'Of co'se Lafette iz de *bosse*! Foah why nod?' Dey sayce he is de sma'tes' man een de Golf! Bah! Jus' beco'se he mague so mooch money!"

"Did dey all say dad?"

"*Non!* Jacques an' José an' de othehs—oweh crowd—mague protes' also lak me! Bud id do no goo'. Doze dam boolies ov hiz come an' t'reat'n uz. Try to mague a fight. W'at gan we do? Dey are t'ree to one and each ov dam iz lak a debil! Dat Lafette iz sma't! Too sma't. He knowce dat he could nod do what he weesh alone, so breeng hiz boolies wit' him . . . an' we gan do nodings! Bud I weel feex dat Lafette yet—*moi*, Grambo!"

"A chance-a weel come. We weel get heem yet," promised Manuel.

The quadroon nodded gloomily. Together they walked along the beach, toward the busy crowd at the landing.

As Grambo had remarked, Jean Lafitte was undoubtedly the undisputed *bosse* of Grande Terre. The privateer had been joyfully welcomed by the majority of the Baratarians, and, in an incredibly short time, almost all authority had been placed in his hands. This was perhaps partly due to the prestige which had accrued to his name through his large smuggling operations and, on the other hand, equally due to the personality of the man himself.

Immediately after his arrival he had summoned into

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conference all of the more powerful and influential of the leaders then present in the Bay. In forceful terms he let them know his plans for the future of Grande Terre. The majority of them readily saw the many advantages they would possess if his scheme were carried out, and heartily acquiesced.

Others, who like Grambo were jealous of Lafitte's popularity and power, did all they could to hinder him, but this availed them little. A group of Jean's "Myrmidons," armed to the teeth, who were in the habit of visiting the malcontents and using a form of gentle persuasion known only to themselves, soon put the fear of Jean Lafitte in their hearts.

But a few of the Baratarians, notably the quadroon, were not altogether pacified. Far from it.

As for Grambo, he was perhaps the most piratical scoundrel of the entire colony, notwithstanding his tendency to boast of the fact. He possessed all of the predatory instincts of the true pirate and was a genuine disciple of the scuttle-the-ship and walk-the-plank school, having frequently practiced many of the cruel deeds generally attributed to his kind. Manuel Espinosa ran him a close second—some said it was *vice versa*.

And thus matters had rested.

It was a bright June day and an unusual bustle was to be seen on the low, sandy island.

A large slaver had been captured the day before and had just been brought into the bay and anchored at Grande Terre. Her cargo of slaves was now being landed on the large wharf, weak, emaciated, and half-dead from their long, tortuous trip. As they came over the ship's side and were landed on the wharf the

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poor human chattels were immediately sent to the slave stockades—large, heavily fenced inclosures containing sheds.

Hordes of half-naked slaves, property of the buccaneers, toiled ceaselessly, loading and unloading bundles, bales, bags, barrels, and packages of every description imaginable. Up and down the slope, back and forth, they hurried, piling their burdens in the flimsy warehouses, or loading some outbound vessel.

Practically the whole Baratarian world was at this one spot; bronzed sailors, swaggering adventurers, conservative tradesmen, loud-voiced pirates, poorly clad fishermen, swarthy Mesquite Indians from the Honduras coast, and equally dark Choctaws from Louisiana.

Among the largest groups of privateersmen at the wharf, perhaps the liveliest of them all was one in which the central figure was the swarthy Grambo, loudly describing some adventure or other in which he had figured. By his side was Manuel Espinosa.

As he spoke, laughing and cursing at intervals, a group of slaves, shackled at the neck to one another so as to form a human chain, halted for a moment to allow another group of slaves to pass.

Among the blacks a negro girl, strangely light complexioned as compared to her fellows, and rather pretty as to face and figure, caught the eye of the swarthy Grambo. He stared at her, unmistakable desire shining in his eyes. The girl, probably the offspring of an African mother and an Arabian father, looked up, intercepted the burning look, and dropped her eyes fearfully.

Grambo had by now stepped out of the chattering

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group and was eying her—her supple body and comely face, the curve of her girlish bosom.

With a word to the overseer he laid his hand on her shoulder. She shrank back at his touch. Grinning, the quadroon ordered that she be taken out of line. His order was immediately obeyed, unnoticed by the surrounding throng. Taking hold of the dangling chain from her neck, he endeavored to lead her away from the wharf, but the frightened girl, understanding his purpose, refused to go, dragging back and finally biting and kicking in her terror.

The surrounding crowd, attracted by the noise, encircled the swarthy pirate and his struggling victim, with loud laughter and coarse jests. This, however, only served to put the quadroon into a rage. Snatching a whip from a near-by overseer, he proceeded to lash the girl, raising bloody welts on her soft, unprotected skin, which shortly was leaving the flesh raw and hanging. Again and again the whip descended on the body of the groveling, shrieking slave, her persecutor seeming to take fiendish delight in his occupation. Espinosa, the Spaniard, bared his yellow teeth in a hideous grin as he looked on approvingly.

It was at this moment that Jean, attracted by the cries of the girl and the loud, obscene curses of the pirate, came upon the scene. As he saw them, his brow grew dark with anger and his handsome black eyes glowed in his pale face like live coals.

Striding through the crowd, he came behind Grambo and with one powerful wrench took the descending lash from the quadroon's hand. With a howl of rage the burly Grambo swung around sharply, to face the smuggler chieftain.

"Geeve-a me back dat wheep!" he demanded, with a curse. At sight of Jean all of his hatred for the Frenchman welled up within his soul. To his former jealousy had come venom. Lafitte had dared to interfere with him, Grambo, the terror of his compeers, in the presence of the whole Baratarian world! His fury rose into his throat, choking him—becoming a physical pain.

A sudden silence fell on the crowd. Every Baratarian there knew instinctively that a crisis had come—that was to determine the future of Grande Terre, perhaps.

For a long moment Jean stared the quadroon in the eye.

Grambo repeated his demand gruffly.

"What were you doing with it, if I may ask?" Lafitte asked, quietly.

"W'at iz dat to you?"

"I requested you to tell me what you were doing with this lash," said Lafitte, mildly, as if he were speaking to a child. His calm voice made an impression on the pirate.

"I was pun'sh'n' dis wench," sullenly.

"Why?"

"*Sacré!* W'at iz dat to you?"

"Why?" His casual air disturbed Grambo. He glanced around the circle of near-by faces. Not one was friendly. His friends, he saw, were all closely surrounded by Lafitte's swashbucklers. He cursed silently. Grambo was not very popular outside his own circle, and he began to imagine that even his own friends were watching his discomfiture with amuse-

ment. Only Espinosa glared at Lafitte balefully, but even he made no move to interfere.

"Why?" came the question again.

"Beco'se she waz disob-bead-yun'!"

"Disobedient?" Lafitte wore an air of polite puzzlement.

"*Oui*. She would nod come wit' me." The next moment he could have bitten his tongue off for that damaging statement.

"Is she your personal property?" asked Lafitte, suavely.

"None of you' dam' bus'nez!" cried Grambo, defiantly, swiftly deciding to brazen it out. "W'at do—"

Lafitte turned to the near-by overseer. The crowd grew thicker.

"Is this slave one of that group?" he demanded, imperiously pointing to the near-by string of slaves.

"Yesseh, *mon capitaine!*" respectfully.

"Has this string been sold yet?"

"No, *monsieur le bosse*. We were joost takin' dem to de black-ivree pen. Dey 've joost come off de sheep."

"Have they been spoken for?"

"No, monsieur. Dey are to go strai't to de block." Lafitte's voice became hard.

"Then how is this slave girl in his possession?"

"I hope you' excellency will pardon me, bud I did nod know," the overseer replied, looking appealingly at the glowering Grambo. The latter gave no sign.

"Speak out!" said Lafitte.

"Grambo—*Capitaine* Grambo, ordeh'd me to loosen heh and to geeve heh to heem. I did nod know . . ."

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Jean wheeled around and faced Grambo again.

"And what have you to say to this, sirrah?" demanded Lafitte. "Since when have you taken upon yourself the authority to take what you want . . . to take what you haven't been given, nor bought at open auction, nor captured yourself? That which is the property of the colony?" he thundered.

For a moment the crestfallen Grambo did not answer. Suddenly he realized that Lafitte was undoubtedly in the right, and cursed himself for a fool. He had broken one of the unwritten laws of the brotherhood. He must act quickly.

"Who are you?" he demanded, in turn, "to tell a free Baratarian w'at to do? Who made you oweh chief—oweh tyran'?" he asked, excitedly. "Who tol' you to bill' dose w'arfs an' huts? An' dat beeg howse of yo'se up on de heel?"

Jean Lafitte looked him over contemptuously.

"You ungrateful dog," he said, scornfully. "May I ask who it was that gave you a start—a ship—a crew—money—when you didn't have a picayune, much less a dollar? May I ask who it was who made you? I might have expected that from a quadroon dog and son of a dog!"

With a bound Grambo was face to face with him, shaking his fist menacingly and uttering fierce curses.

"Stand back, dog!" exclaimed Lafitte.

Grambo only cursed the more. His hand was sneaking toward the knife in his belt.

"Stand back, thief!" said Jean, scornfully, "before I give you a lesson for your insubordination! Malherébé, place this quadroon in the *calabosa*!"

With a shriek of rage the pirate sprang at Jean.

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In his hand was clenched a gleaming knife. There was an involuntary gasp from the bystanders and a general rush forward.

But the cool Lafitte was prepared. A pistol flashed from its holster, spoke reprovingly, and Grambo fell, shot through the heart.

For an instant, with a contemptuous smile on his lips, Lafitte stared at the body. Then, without a glance toward the crowd, he replaced his smoking pistol in its holster and nonchalantly walked away.

The crowd closed around the body.

Manuel Espinosa kneeled and, lifting Grambo's head, stared into his glazed eyes, morbidly regarding the carmine stream that was dyeing the Baratarian's scarlet shirt a deeper hue. His head bent, he bared his teeth with his characteristic grimace, and his ugly hands bunched convulsively as if they already felt Lafitte's throat in their iron grasp. Terrible curses choked him—but did not pass his thin lips, for the Spaniard was no fool.

After all, his fury was not so much over the death of his crony as it was an expression of his virulent hatred for the *bosse* of Barataria. Sorrow was utterly foreign to the nature of the freebooter; indeed, he felt not even regret, for Grambo's death merely cleared his own path to the leadership of their bloody clique, which he had long desired. To attain that end he would have unscrupulously murdered the quadroon himself at the proper time—indeed, he had recently been considering ways and means for just such an act.

But his hatred of Lafitte was but intensified, and within his shadowy soul Manuel Encarnacion Espinosa swore vengeance.

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When he finally raised his head, however, and rose to his feet, his swarthy face was blandly imperturbable.

Grambo, the quadroon, had ceased to exist, but his work was to be carried on.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH:

*Wherein Our Pirate Meets a
Lady, and One Virginia
Grymes Hears a Strange Tale*

I

"**S**PEAK OF ANGELS," remarked Pierre, brightly, "and you hear the flutter of their wings!" He straightened up from his bow to the occupants of a passing carriage.

"Meaning—?" asked Jean, inquiringly.

"The two ladies who have just passed."

"The fair Amélie and her cousin Angélique?"

"Precisely. It is something unusual to see them together. I wonder what's up?"

"Ze frien'sheep of two women ees nozzing bud a plot against a zird," contributed De Moulin, sententiously.

The little group of friends, the Lafittes, De Moulin, and two Creole acquaintances, all laughed together at this conceit. It was a bright sunny day and the Rue Royale was alive with promenaders. As the little group strolled down the street headed toward the waterfront, stopping every now and then to salute a passing acquaintance, bow to a lady or ladies in some picturesque balcony or passing carriage, they presented a gallant sight. At this period of history, fashions in men's clothing were undergoing a marked change. The Lafittes, like most of their Creole friends, still clung to the colorful knee-breeches and silk stockings of the Revolutionary period, or highly polished boots.

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They carried sword-canes. The Americans of the new order of things, however—men like Livingston, Grymes, Governor Claiborne, and others of their official contemporaries—wore the long breeches which were buttoned at the ankles, that were just at that time becoming the vogue, with long stocks for neckwear, high beaver hats, and double-breasted, full-skirted coats.

"I have heard," said Pierre, "that Amélie is contemplating entering the Convent of the Ursulines. Is it true?"

De Moulin laughed wickedly.

"If you notice," he remarked, "ze ladiz turn to God when ze dev'l won' hav' nozzin' moah to do wiz dem—dat is, speak'n' gen'rallee . . ." he amended, hastily.

Jean laughed.

"Don't defame the fair sex so, François," said he, "for if men loved God as much as they love women—as Pascal says—men would be saints!"

"Without love," said Pierre, sagely, "it would be sad to be a man . . ."

"From which I am to infer," responded his brother, "that you are in that tortured state? Who is it this time?"

Pierre sighed heavily.

"You may jest about it, little brother, but wait—just wait—until the germ bites *you*! I should like to see that day . . ."

"The holy saints forfend!" exclaimed Jean, with mock piety.

"Of co'se Pierre eez in love!" cried De Moulin. "An' so am I—an' oweh fr'en's heah, too."

"What do you mean?" demanded Jean.

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"There can be bud won," went on the Creole.

"Who?" with perplexity.

"La belle Américaine!"

"A nymph—a fairy!" cried Pierre. "I had forgotten that you but just came to town, Jean. Forgive me. She is a stranger—an American—and she is ravishing—divine!"

"Heh nem is Virginia Grymes," contributed one of the others.

"Grymes?" asked Jean. "Could it be—"

"Mais oui, mon frère!" It is the only daughter of our good friend Grymes, the district attorney. It is said that she left a trail of broken hearts in Philadelphia and Richmond. *Sacré diable!* One can well believe it! She was the belle of the Assembly Ball in the Quaker City when she made her *début* there."

"Ah, Pierre," said Jean, "I see you've been up to your old tricks. Has she refused you, yet?"

"Only twice," returned his brother, coolly, "but there is yet time. Women like brave men, but audacious ones still more. I shall keep on trying. However, I advise you to watch yourself well, *mon frère*, for if she ever directs the battery of her eyes at you your poor heart will capitulate at once. She is not the usual type of girl one meets, Jean. Somehow she is different, fresher, a typical American, a Virginia rose!"

Jean looked amused. No woman had ever interested him like that. And he told himself that no woman ever would. He had much to learn!

"Whatever she is," he remarked, dryly, "I see that she has no lack of supporters. But you need have no cause for anxiety. . . . What's that, gentlemen?"

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With one accord the group turned their eyes in the direction of his glance. There, a few hundred yards up the street, was tearing a large open carriage, of the type known as barouche, drawn by two magnificent black horses. Their eyes flamed, their teeth were bared between slaving jaws, and their clattering hoofs struck sparks from the old cobble-stones.

As the careening equipage bore down on them the crowd scattered left and right, upsetting one another in their eagerness to escape from the path of the oncoming steeds, to whose fright they added materially by their excited cries and calls.

On second glance one saw that the box was empty. Almost two blocks behind the carriage ran a coachman in livery, his black face almost livid with fear, shouting to the horses and brandishing his useless whip.

The woman, or rather, girl, who was in the carriage, made no outcry, but gripped the arm of her seat, her face white and tense, lips parted, eyes wide.

Less than a block away, at the foot of the street, was the levee, beyond which sparkled the waters of the Mississippi. It was straight for this that the maddened runaways were thundering, straight to destruction.

The street was in an uproar. In the whole crowd of sailors, soldiers, merchants, laborers, loafers, and negroes, not one man had the presence of mind to do something to stop their spectacular flight—except one.

Suddenly, as if he had sprung up from the very earth, there appeared a man standing in the middle of the street . . . standing in the path of the oncoming runaways bearing down upon him with the speed of a veritable Juggernaut. The crowd for an instant

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ceased its cries, awaiting the further action of this rash man.

The runaways were about fifteen yards from him when the man, pistol in hand, aimed at the nearest horse.

That brief moment before he fired seemed an age to the onlookers. Just as the horses were upon him he nimbly jumped aside. With a scream that sounded almost human, the off horse fell dead in its tracks, a bullet in his head. The other came to an abrupt halt.

In the meantime the man had not been idle. As the horses lurched past him, he sprang to the carriage just in time to grasp its occupant in his arms as she fell forward from the jar of the sudden halt. So nicely was this maneuver timed that she hardly felt the shock and was lightly swung into the street.

The crowd, cheering, surged tumultuously about them, leaving them inclosed in a little space by the carriage steps.

Jean Lafitte stared at the girl he had rescued, and, unconsciously dropped his jaw in amazement. For the first time in his life he felt disconcerted, bewildered, unsure of himself. His mind was in a tumult. Never before, he thought, had he seen such a beautiful girl.

Nut-brown hair, dark, curly and now a mass of riotous disorder, hung about her shoulders, framing a piquant, highbred face of a delightful olive complexion, which was heightened by a soft rosy glow. Her eyes, veiled by long silky lashes, topped with exquisitely arched eyebrows, were of an indescribable greenish-gray-brown color, the emerald note predominating, perhaps. At the moment, in his subconscious mind,

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Jean was trying to solve that all-important question, but their color was so changeable that he felt himself baffled. Before he had time to complete his mental inventory of her charms, however, he was brought back to the prosaic realities of life by the sound of her voice.

Low, mellow, well modulated, it enchanted him as much as had her finely cut face and slim, graceful, perfectly proportioned figure. As she spoke he forced himself to listen.

"I cannot fully express, sir, my gratitude to you for your brave act. It was wonderful!" Her eyes glowed, and her girlish bosom could be seen to rise and fall from the excitement engendered by that wild ride.

"Scipio, the coachman, left the box for a few minutes, and our poor horses took fright at something. In a moment they had bolted on that terrible, thrilling ride! It was glorious!"

Jean mentally reared back on his heels. Here was a bit of femininity altogether different from the languishing, insipid ladies of his acquaintance.

"Glorious!" he gasped.

"Of course! It was wonderful!" she cried, not noticing the look on his face. "Only, I'm sorry my poor horses caused you any inconvenience."

"Wonderful!" "Inconvenience!" Jean stared.

"Do you realize, mademoiselle," he said, stiffly, "that you might have been seriously injured—killed—or perhaps drowned?"

"Drowned?" she repeated, with a bewildered look. An old sailor, one of the bystanders, now chimed in.

"*Mon Dieu!* De black devils were headed straight

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for dat wharf, down dere. If it hadn't been for *monsieur le capitaine . . .*" His voice trailed off vaguely into nothingness, as if the words he left unsaid were too terrible for contemplation, much less speech.

Her terrified eyes followed his finger. She shuddered. Then, as suddenly as before, she resumed her former attitude. Her voice was abjectly apologetic.

"How ungrateful I have acted! Pray forgive me, sir . . . er . . . Captain?" she begged, archly contrite.

The bow that *monsieur le capitaine* made was worthy of a Brummel. It set her to thinking. Indeed, he presented a figure that any maiden would not disdain to admire, and this one was not false to her sex.

For the first time she critically took note of his firm mouth, square chin, domineering arched nose, broad brow, fine eyes and graceful figure, and was at once favorably impressed. She also suddenly noticed the obvious respect accorded him by the bystanders, a fact worthy of investigation in itself. She at once burned to know his identity.

"I realize now, sir," she went on, "what a debt I owe you, and shall never forget it. If you would do me the honor of calling, sir, my father would take pleasure in adding his thanks to mine. Perhaps you know him. I—I am Virginia Grymes," she ended.

So this was the new beauty—the rage of Creole society! He might have known it, he thought, vexed.

"And I—I am Jean Lafitte," he answered, with a studied carelessness. Though he scarcely knew why, he waited for her next words eagerly. There was a

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momentary pause as the significance of that well-known name sank into her consciousness.

"Not—not—*the* Jean Lafitte," she faltered, and then could have bitten off her tongue.

He stiffened, and a curious dignity was apparent in his reply.

"I believe I have that honor," he said, dryly, as he mentally wondered at the repugnance manifest in her tone, which he could not understand.

She hesitated for the briefest timable space, and in her answer Jean recognized her as the thoroughbred and gentlewoman that she was, notwithstanding the fact that she obviously had cause to dislike his name.

"Both my father and I would be delighted to have you call at your earliest convenience," she said, graciously, if somewhat stiltedly.

At this moment Pierre Lafitte, accompanied by his friends, reached them, having fought his way with difficulty through the dense crowd.

"My dear Mademoiselle Grymes," he cried, bowing, "how strange that this should have happened! And that it should have been my brother who had the pleasure of serving you! The lucky dog!"

"Your brother!" she exclaimed, strangely moved.

"But certainly! *Que je suis bête!* I have forgotten that you do not know him. How awkward of me! Allow me to introduce, mademoiselle," said Pierre, turning, "my only brother, M'sieu Jean Lafitte." He stopped suddenly, embarrassed and surprised.

Jean Lafitte had disappeared.

And not ten feet away, in the thick of the throng,

Manuel Espinosa studied the little tableau with his insolent eyes. He had seen Lafitte unobtrusively slip away, but his intent glance had not followed him. It was fixed on Virginia Grymes, and it was not pleasant to see. At that moment his eyes were those of a primitive beast. . . .

II

Margaret Claiborne frowned.

"Yes, I'll admit that he's brave, Jinny, and all of that, but I wouldn't cultivate him."

"But he seemed very nice. And really, honey, I almost insulted him. When he told me his name, I exclaimed, like a perfect little fool—'not *the* Jean Lafitte!'—and it sounded *terrible*, my dear! But I didn't know that he was really a gentleman . . . and such a handsome one . . . before to-day. You see, in your letters to me you mentioned him occasionally, and called him a pirate. And then, his name is also known back home, too. They call him the Buccaneer of Barataria—that is, the newspapers do, and lots of other horrid names; so—so I naturally came to think of him as being a picturesque old pirate, with black whiskers—with a red handkerchief on his head, and pistols, and everything, and I was astonished, you may be sure, when that handsomely dressed gentleman coolly said his name was Jean Lafitte. What does it mean, Margie?"

"Simply this. This Lafitte person, although a pirate, is a rather prominent society man in New Orleans."

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"No!" Miss Grymes was shocked or surprised. Perhaps both—perhaps neither.

"Yes, it's a fact. Strange as it may seem, the very best people here—the Creoles—who are, you know, Virgie, descended from some of the oldest and proudest families in France—welcome him and his brother in society as if he were one of themselves."

"That reminds me! I just learned that that fascinating Mr. Lafitte I met at the Lavalayé dinner last night is his brother. He saw his brother, the pirate—rescue me—that is, stop the horses, to-day, and wanted to introduce me formally to him, but he had disappeared."

"Yes, Pierre is rather nice. But his brother is impossible."

"But why, Margie? They are both in the same trade, aren't they? And I really think Jean—Mr. Lafitte—is much better-looking than his brother. He has such fine eyes!"

Margaret Claiborne flushed suspiciously, but Virginia forgot it at her next words:

"I thought so once, too, Virgie, but let me tell you *why* I say he is impossible. If it were only his occupation, I wouldn't mind it so much, for everyone in New Orleans is his friend—everyone worth knowing. But—he is a murderer!"

Virginia Grymes gasped, her delicately chiseled lips parting in surprise and disclosing a row of pearls, apparently.

"A—a—murderer!"

"Yes. It is said that he killed a man—another pirate—shot him in cold blood!"

"Here in New Orleans?"

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"No; at their rendezvous at a little island in Barataria Bay, about fifty miles from here."

"That handsome—er—nice-looking young man, shot—*killed* a man?" asked Virginia incredulously.

"Yes," reiterated her friend.

"But why?"

Margaret Claiborne unconsciously lowered her voice.

Virginia leaned forward.

"Over—a woman! A negro slave girl!"

Virginia gasped, and suddenly felt faint. A feeling of intense disgust—of loathing, pervaded her.

"How do you know?" she questioned, breathlessly. After all, she should not condemn him unheard. He had saved her life. And he did have such fine eyes!

Margaret leaned back in her chair.

"My father told me," she replied, simply, as if stating an incontrovertible fact. "He ought to know, oughtn't he?"

Virginia nodded dumbly, her eyes on the floor, her mind awlirl.

Yes, Margaret's father ought to know. Who should, if not William C. C. Claiborne?

He was the Governor of Louisiana.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH:

*How His Excellency the
Governor, Issues a
Proclamation*

I

TEN years had passed since that ill-fated visit of the Lafittes to the Isle of Mauritius, but the dramatic scene enacted there had been indelibly stamped on the mind of the younger. As Pierre Dominique, wise philosopher that he was, had said, Jean's passion for the hapless Lizette Fondac had been a mere infatuation—a passing fancy—which, like most emotions of its kind, would have dissolved into nothingness in the course of time.

If Lizette had not died as she had, and so changed the entire current of Jean's life, Lafitte, perhaps, youthful and impressionable that he was, would have in time fallen out of love with her as quickly as he had tumbled into that amorous state. For such is the immutable law of youth. On the other hand, however, it is not improbable to assume that Jean, being his own inexplicable self, might also have stayed in love—married her—and this chapter in American history might never have materialized.

But Lizette was ordained by an inscrutable Fate to die, and, dying, to be the instrument that influenced his whole future, not to mention the lives of countless others.

He had enshrined this French fisher-maiden in his heart, in the firm belief that he would never love

again. Years had passed since the birth of that resolution and he had not yet broken it . . . which was an even stranger thing.

The Lizette incident, however, had served its purpose in the great scheme of things. Because of the memory of her, during his short but exciting career of piracy in the Caribbean, he had never harmed a woman prisoner, nor so much as allowed his men to do so; treating them as courteously as place and policy would permit. Men would grumble and men would jeer, but in the end they came to respect his whim, for they could not help but recognize his prowess.

Of course, in a certain sense, he was not much better than the average run of the scavengers of the high seas. It was not consistent with his nature that he should be a celibate. But although he had the vices of his calling, as well as of any other, for that matter, his taste was a fastidious one, and his few amorous adventures were well worth relating, if only for their romantic value. But these had been born of passion, not love; or at least not the love that he imagined he had possessed for Lizette.

Those ten years were a curious chapter in his life . . . a period of moods . . . of inhibitions . . . the metamorphosis of the youthful mind.

Unconsciously, however, the image of Lizette faded—faded and became a dream of the dead past. At first he had his moments of brooding in the still watches of the night, leaning on the taffrail, perhaps, staring moodily on the moonlit waters of the phosphorescent sea, which, rolling, ever rolling, washed against the sides of his ship, aflame with ruffled incandescence.

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But after his reunion with his brother, all this changed.

Once established in New Orleans, with abundant means and plentiful leisure, he found himself plunged into a whirl of gayety—Creole balls and Creole society. Gallant figures and gentlemen of leisure, the Lafittes were invited everywhere, and many were the sparkling eyes that turned in admiration on the two. Pierre Dominique immediately accepted the many challenges and soon became the most flirtatious of all the Creole beaus, but Jean did not yield so easily.

In an incredibly short time Jean Lafitte became a *poseur*, wearing an unconsciously assumed mask, behind which he withdrew himself as a protection against sentiment and behind which he dreamed great dreams and planned great plans.

And now, at last, his schemes were bearing fruit, his ambition well on the road to fulfillment.

Before that memorable year of 1811 was over, Baratavia Bay, the headquarters of the pirates of the Gulf, had established such a reputation for itself in Southern trade that even the national government was forced to officially recognize its importance as a factor to be coped with in handling the commercial situation of that day. The name of Jean Lafitte stood out in red letters upon the economic and political ledgers of not a few traders in Southern cotton states and the Mississippi Valley region.

Lafitte had indeed attained his ambition. After only three years in the United States, he, together with the efficient aid of Pierre Dominique, had brought the smuggling profession to such a point that legitimate commerce in the great seaport of New Orleans

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had almost vanished and the United States customs in Louisiana, never very popular with the Creoles, was practically a farce.

Since his arrival at Grande Terre, when he had taken charge of the pirate colony, the settlement had become as if reborn.

Many large wharfs, warehouses, slave stockades, and houses had been erected, and were overflowing. The bay swarmed with every type of vessel, from almost every nation on the globe. The wharves teemed with sweating slaves and stevedores who busily unloaded the contraband cargoes, both human and otherwise, the former transferred to the log stockades, where they were kept until sold at the auction block and thence transported to the plantations of the interior, often by way of New Orleans, through which they went duty free.

Of the booty other than "black ivory," the Baratarians had their share. This, when brought to Grande Terre, was placed in long, low, closely-guarded warehouses, to be disposed of at the whim or will of the "bosse." And of this there was not a little. Jewels, silks, gold, arms, ammunition, rare wines, fine clothes—valuables of all kinds, including a heterogeneous collection of luxuries and necessities, were all there and it is little wonder that the pirates lived a life of riotous luxury and wild carousal.

What was not used by the buccaneers was disposed of by many devious ways. Part was smuggled to New Orleans and there turned over to dishonest shopkeepers, who sold it at a large profit. As the large variety of articles daily pouring into their possession demanded to be sold by the same number of dealers,

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the Lafittes reaped a double profit by charging dealers for the privilege of handling their goods. This fee the dealers paid willingly enough, for they could buy goods from the Baratarians at one-third the price they would have had to pay legitimate wholesale houses.

But the unheard-of prosperity of the smugglers, or "privateers," began to have another effect on the situation. The shipping of New Orleans and neighboring trade centers had become seriously impaired, for sea captains and planters soon got in the habit of going to Grande Terre to buy their slaves and supplies at bargain prices that could not be obtained in New Orleans.

It was not long before Grande Terre changed from a mere pirates' rendezvous to a feverish trade center. Traders came from all parts of the South to do business at Barataria. At this period, according to an official statement, four hundred slaves were sold at the auction block there, daily.

New Orleans felt this competition, but nothing could be done to remedy it. The business of the banks decreased because of lack of deposits, owing to the absence of trade in the legitimate trade centers.

But at Barataria all was liveliness. So defiant of the law did the Baratarians become that the streets of New Orleans were placarded with handbills announcing the daily auction sales at Grand Terre, and the daring "privateers" even had the effrontery to post them alongside the Governor's proclamations, which offered rewards for their arrest and conviction.

Jean and his followers still visited New Orleans.

Surrounded by groups of admirers, the Baratarians swaggered through the busy waterfront and business streets and fairly overran the Place d'Armes. Every

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dive and grog-shop on Canal Street welcomed them with open arms, willingly took their money, and resounded to the loud recital of their exploits.

The Lafittes had the *entrée* to the most conservative of Creole homes, attended balls, fêtes, dinners, and other social events galore. They were social lions.

And now, in New Orleans, at the close of these ten years of transition from mental adolescence to spiritual manhood, Jean was beginning to realize that he had never loved Lizette Fondac, that, after all, his brother had been right.

But it had not been his brother who had brought home to him this realization. It had taken a beautiful girl to bring him to his senses . . . a girl whom he hardly knew and had met but once. A vision in silk and crinoline who thought it was "wonderful" to flirt with death. . . .

A new star had appeared on his horizon.

II

"Oh, father, I've had the most curious adventure!"

John R. Grymes, district attorney of New Orleans and parent of its present reigning toast, looked up from his work and enthusiastically returned Virginia's caress.

"Really, Jinny?" he asked, carefully sanding a letter. "I hope you enjoyed it."

Virginia pouted adorably.

"Oh, not that kind, father. You'd never guess it in a coon's age. It was like this: I was just returning from Margaret's, and stopped in to see old Madame

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Leroux about that heavenly gown she's making for me. You should see it, father, with its lace—"

"Yes—yes—I'm sure it's very pretty, honey, and no doubt I'll soon get a pretty bill for it. But you said something about an adventure?"

"Well, father, just as I was leaving and had entered the carriage, one of those horrid old sailors passed by—he looked like a pirate—and he was singing and shouting, and poor Molly and Billy got frightened and ran away."

Her father straightened abruptly.

"And where was Scipio?" he demanded.

"Scipio had not yet mounted the box, father, so—"

"I'll whip that black scoundrel within an inch—"

"No, you won't father. It wasn't really his fault. Anyway, they ran away and went through the whole city, I suppose, before we stopped. We had come all the way from the Rue Des Ursulines down to one of those dirty waterfront streets, and I was almost scared to death, when a man stepped out of the crowd, right in front of Billy and Molly, and—shot Billy!"

Grymes looked worried.

"Was that necessary, do you think, Jinny?"

Her eyes clouded.

"He saved my life, father. The horses were heading straight for the wharf, and an old sailor said that if Captain Lafitte hadn't stopped them we'd have all—" At this point she could not help sobbing. John Grymes felt a lump rise in his throat at the thought of the danger in which his only child had been.

"Who did you say the man was, honey? Captain—who?"

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"Lafitte!"

"Good God! Not Jean Lafitte?"

Her adorable little mouth tightened.

"Yes, and I wish that it were anyone else in the world but he!"

"Why, child?" astonished at her vehemence.

"Because he's a pirate—a low sailor—a smuggler."

"Why, Jinny, who in the world told you all that?"

"Then he isn't?"

The district attorney looked rather uncomfortable.

"Well, some people might call it that. Perhaps the Lafittes do engage in questionable practices. But then there are few of our citizens who aren't connected with it in the same way. You have a wrong impression of Mr. Lafitte, honey. He is one of the most popular men in New Orleans—moves in the best circles, and is well liked by everybody. Really, Jinny—"

"But, father, he's a—murderer."

"Who told you *that?*" was the emphatic query.

"Margaret Claiborne. She says that he killed a man—shot him, just because he wouldn't do what he told him."

She did not mention the negro slave girl. Young ladies of her day would have died before mentioning such an affair to a man—even to a father. . . .

"That's all nonsense!"

"No, it's not! Her father, His Excellency, says the same thing, so *she* says. And, father, during the last eight years I've been going to Miss Borden's school in Philadelphia, with Margaret, I've never known her to—exaggerate."

"Of course not! But she herself may be mistaken.

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Don't you know, Jinny, that Governor Claiborne is the worst enemy the Lafittes have. It's very natural that he should tell Margaret so. Don't you worry, honey, Jean Lafitte is a perfect gentleman, no matter what his occupation, and so is his brother."

"Yes, his brother is very nice. I met him at the Lavalayé dinner last evening, and he was very attentive to me. But I couldn't very well be rude to him, could I, father?"

He smiled.

"No, not very well. Nor to his brother, either. Especially after he has done you the service of saving your life."

She colored.

"Well, he acted nicely, and I appreciated it. But still, I can't help thinking that he is a pirate."

"Well, forget it, honey. And take everything Margaret tells you about the Lafittes with a grain of salt, because it's her father's ideas that she expresses. Now run along, like a good little girl, and let father finish his letter."

Pouting prettily, she kissed him again, and left him to his own devices.

III

It was a week later.

Virginia Grymes had just returned home from a dance to find her father, as usual, in the library. On the table in front of his armchair were many empty wine glasses and a few broken card counters. He was playing a game of solitaire, but it was very evi-

dent that he had been playing at cards with a gathering of friends.

Virginia looked at the card-littered, wet table disapprovingly.

"You've been gambling again, father," she said, accusingly, "and after you promised me!"

The district attorney flushed.

"There, there, Jinny! Just a little game between friends. But I have some news for you. Lafitte has been here."

"To see me?" eagerly.

"No, honey, on business. But there is more news, if you care to hear it."

"What is it, father?" She sat on the arm of his chair, playfully rumpling his hair.

"It's more of a joke, I think. Your friend, the Governor, sent a revenue cutter yesterday—that is, he got Washington to send one—to Baratania Bay, with the purpose of destroying the colony of Grande Terre. But it turned out to be a farce. The pompous fool ought to have known that the smugglers have spies everywhere. Why, they knew the government vessel was coming before it had left the harbor."

Virginia was immediately all interest.

"So what happened?"

"Well, when Captain Lloyd and his crew arrived at Grande Terre, the smugglers, or pirates—which ever you prefer—simply laughed at them. Not only that, but they politely asked them to come ashore and offered them cognac and champagne. Think of it—cognac and champagne, when they came with the intention of capturing the whole place! Anyway, they were forced to return, empty-handed, having been

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warned by the Baratarians not to return." He paused to chuckle. "I think it's the best joke I've heard in a long time. All New Orleans is talking about it, and laughing at Claiborne up their sleeves. He should have known that it would take more than one ship and one crew of customs officers to attack hundreds of desperate, well-armed men who take pleasure in defying the law. But not only that, it is said that even the government agents are in partnership with the smugglers. It is really hard to tell who isn't, nowadays."

Virginia looked thoughtful.

"Still, father, I hardly think the Governor was unprepared for this. He must be shrewd enough to think of some other plan, if that failed; or he wouldn't be the Governor of Louisiana."

Grymes only laughed in answer.

Virginia's suspicions were proved well founded the next day, however, for the citizens of New Orleans found a new proclamation posted about the city.

This was to the effect that His Excellency denounced the Baratarians as pirates and cautioned the residents of the state to have intercourse with them in no way whatsoever. He moreover threatened dire penalties for those who would disobey this decree, together with any Baratarian who might fall into his hands.

However, to the secret joy of the majority of the inhabitants, notably the Creoles, with whom the United States government was at the time extremely unpopular, the Baratarians heeded the gubernatorial threats no more than if they had never been published. Frightened? Not they, *mes amis!*

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On the contrary, the Lafittes, exquisitely dressed, chatted with the prominent merchants and bankers on street corners and in the cafés; they patronized charities and public entertainments more than ever, were still prominent figures at the social functions of New Orleans society—and continued to post their notices of slave auctions, right beside the Governor's proclamation!

By this time the worthy Claiborne became desperate. It was not long before a second manifesto appeared, offering five hundred dollars reward for the arrest of either of the Lafittes.

It was then that matters came to a head.

CHAPTER THE NINTH:

*In Which His Excellency Proposes;
the Legislature Disposes;
and Pierre Dominique Becomes the
Guest of the State*

I

IT WAS now early December, and the social season of the Creoles' *Petit Paris* was at its height. Indeed, everything conspired to make that year the most eventful, socially speaking, of any that had gone before it, unless one excepts the equally notable season when that most fascinating person, Mr. Aaron Burr, had been the guest of honor at a hundred fêtes.

But this season had indeed opened auspiciously and many were the matchmaking Creole mammas who planned for their daughters intricate campaigns of offense and defense, with all the skill and finesse of seasoned generals, against all and sundry eligible bachelors. And equally numerous were the aforesaid eligible gallants, out for conquests and wary for possible matrimonial traps.

When the new political régime had first been entered upon there had been a rather abrupt cessation of social happenings of any brilliance, but when the Creoles—which appellation, by the way, is correctly used only when speaking of American-born persons of full and unmixed European ancestry, without any admixture of Indian or of negro blood—when the Creoles gradually began to admit the disliked *Américains* to their exclusive social circles, the social activities of New

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Orleans began to take on a new impetus. It was not long before locality distinctions began to fade. Governor Claiborne, himself, had done much to destroy these distinctions by marrying two separate times into Creole families.

To add to the brilliance of this present season, the Legislature of the state of Louisiana was holding its yearly session in New Orleans, and the presence of its members, who were representative of the most prominent and cultured families in the state, helped to add to the general social gayety. In most cases their families had accompanied them from their respective districts, primarily to take part in the annual social whirl.

This was the New Orleans of old—the real New Orleans. A city essentially French in customs and breeding, European in culture and social atmosphere. Louisiana, like its sister states of the South, with its representative population descended directly from the European upper classes, was really European in its outlook upon everything—on world affairs, in its literature, in its fashions. As Virginians were in the main of Cavalier stock, so Louisianians were remnants of the *ancien régime* of France. Individually and collectively did these Southern States represent the cream of American aristocracy and culture.

And these gentlemen of the State Legislature, in turn, were representative of the best families in the state, living examples of the real definition of "Creole"; wealthy, cultured, haughty; true "blue-bloods". . . persons truly to the manner born.

These were the friends and compeers of the Lafittes.

And on this eventful December day these were the

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men who sat in the legislative chamber when Governor Claiborne delivered his notable address.

William Claiborne, clean-shaven, hawk-nosed, and with an air that seemed to challenge the world at large, was on the speaker's rostrum, addressing the silent assemblage. It was very seldom indeed that the Governor of Louisiana addressed in person either house of the Legislature, and not a few of the members thereof felt surprise to see him there.

After the rather unnecessary formal introduction by the Speaker, His Excellency plunged directly into his subject. That it was of importance was attested by the close attention paid his discourse by every member of that dignified body.

The great room, stately in its proportions and blazing with the light of many lamps, provided a picturesque setting. Not a sound was to be heard except the voice of the speaker, rising, falling, clear, lucid, and coldly concise, and with an undercurrent of righteous indignation:

"And, gentlemen," His Excellency was saying as he harangued them, "it behooves us, as the official guardians of the welfare of this great state and territory, to see that the citizens who placed us in office—in this position of honor and trust that we occupy—should be served, and served to the best of our ability.

"Obviously, gentlemen, it is our duty to unselfishly sacrifice both ourselves and our personal interests for the best interests of the people as a whole—our constituency. And in this particular case I say that, as Governor of Louisiana, in my official capacity and as a conscientious citizen, I honestly believe that the wisest, the most logical thing to do is to wipe out this

atrocious practice of smuggling, this unparalleled menace to the commonwealth!" He glanced pugnaciously over to that part of the room known as the "Left," where sat the acknowledged supporters of the privateers.

"This practice has enriched the worst element of our population. In innumerable instances it has debauched magistrates and police officers!" There was a well-defined stir in the assemblage.

"It is a stigma upon the state and an infringement upon the rights of our legitimate merchants! Obnoxious to the prosperity of every honest citizen. . . .

"As you all know, business in shipping circles of this city of New Orleans is practically at a standstill. Legitimate commerce has been crippled. The very prosperity of the entire Mississippi Valley is at stake. Not only that, but the United States customs in New Orleans is practically a farce!

"I prophesy, gentlemen, that if stringent steps are not immediately taken to put a stop to this rank piracy, this flagrant public lawbreaking, the honor and safety of our fair state will be so far jeopardized as to cause the national authorities to step in, perhaps use martial law! Think of the disgrace of such a proceeding!"

His Excellency paused a moment to mop his perspiring forehead, his auditors still attentive, but impassive as stone images. He went on:

"But you gentlemen of this honorable assembly know the details of these various crimes as well as I, so I will no longer take up your time. It is necessary to act at once. That is why I have come here. And I shall speak plainly.

"I hereby request that an appropriation be made by the Legislature of Louisiana, by the use of which a force of armed men may be collected and properly provided for. With these I propose to break up this unspeakable buccaneering business. Gentlemen, I ask you for funds to destroy that pirates' nest infesting the bay of Baratavia, that we may vindicate the honor of Louisiana. Gentlemen, the welfare of the state is in your hands!"

Two hours later, at the gubernatorial mansion, Claiborne received his reply from the Legislature. It was as brief and to the point as his address.

The members of the Legislature begged to inform His Excellency that there were no funds available, at present, for the purpose he required.

The cautious legislators had declined to take action, partly for the reason that they were unwilling to interfere with an enterprise that, illegitimate or not, was unquestionably developing the resources of lower Louisiana and incidentally was enriching their constituents; and, partly, because many of them, themselves, were connected with the Baratarians in various ways.

But the Governor could not know this, nor appreciate it if he did. In any event, the refusal in no whit served to abate His Excellency's choler. Claiborne stared at the reply for a long while and then turned to his secretary, a pimply-faced youth with a nascent mustache, who sat at a small desk, paring his finger nails, his face apparently a vacuous blank.

"Milford!" he called, imperiously.

Milford suddenly came to life.

"Yes, Your Excellency!"

"Those damned idiots down in the Legislature have refused me the appropriation!"

"Really, Your Excellency!"

"Those driveling dolts! . . . those demented fools! . . . those smuggling dogs! They're smugglers, every one of them, I can swear, Milford!"

"Quite so, Your Excellency." Milford surreptitiously studied his thumb nail. It was a bit ragged, he thought.

"Damn you!" cried Claiborne. "Shut up!"

Milford cleared his throat uneasily, but his master had already forgotten him.

"No doubt they're every one of them in the pay of that damned Lafitte!" fussed the Governor.

Milford nodded assent, owlshly.

"Was ever man so ill served before—was ever an Executive so ignored?"

Milford, however, was imperturbable. He did not say so, but he could not see where it was a Legislature's duty to serve its governor, although he wisely refrained from expressing his opinion. It is the better part of discretion to keep such opinions to oneself, when one has to earn one's bread and butter, and especially when one hopelessly loves one's master's daughter. At thought of the blond, ascetic-looking Margaret Claiborne he gulped.

Finally the Governor quieted down and stared again at the fatal letter from the Legislature, thinking deeply in the interval.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet.

Milford also jumped, although he was already on his feet.

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"Milford," he commanded, "send for Judge Cabell at once—at once, do you hear? But wait, I have a note to send to the courthouse. Wait a moment until I write it."

Milford gulped and then glanced at his thumb-nail.

It was still a bit ragged.

II

Pierre Dominique, his eyes moodily fixed on the glistening shoulders of his dusky blacksmith's as they busily moved around in the firelight, swung his sword-cane idly. Apparently all was not well with Pierre. The truth was that Virginia Grymes, the evening before, had refused his proffered heart and hand.

François de Moulin, true friend that he was, sympathetically commiserated with him.

"Don' worree, *mon ami*, zere are many ozzer demoiselles who weel nod repulse Pierre. Try you' luck wiz Gabrielle, or Céleste Angélique." He gracefully twisted the ends of his mustache, eying Pierre mischievously. Lafitte, catching the look, reddened.

"What do you know about—Angélique?" he demanded.

De Moulin laughed and clapped him on the back.

"*Comme c'est drôle!* I know all, *mon galant*, all! Abou' ze flow'rs, an' *billets*, an' zat histo'ical serenade und'—"

"Shut up!"

"—ze balc'ny. An' how all change' when *la belle* Virginia come—"

Pierre shrugged his shoulders in exasperation.

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"If Angélique had not grown so stout—so fleshy; but what can a man do? One can't be expected to bind one's affections fast to one woman all the time. That were to make love as irksome as marriage! And, as the poet says, '*Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis*'!"

The Creole made a grimace.

"A plague on you' Latin! Why drag in a poet? *Ventre-saint-gris!* How een-consist'nt eez man! Heah you say zat love eez as irksome as marriage. And a moment ago you were on ze verge of despair becoz *la belle* Virginia refuse' you! An' eet ees bet-teh so. You do nod love heh, Pierre. Fah from eet. You are een love wiz ze game of love! You, oldeh zan Jean, are nod as wise as he. You know w'at I b'lieve, Pierre? I b'lieve zat *la belle* Virginia loves M'sieu Jean! *Voilà!*"

Pierre stared at him with open disbelief.

"Jean? You are mad, François, stark, staring mad! Why, she dislikes him—nay, hates him. I cannot help but see it."

De Moulin laughed.

"Ah, Pierre, you 'ave much to learn. When a woman show hate foah a man—show scorn—she eez interest' in him. When she ees indifferent—*dame!* Zat is an altogezzer different mattaire. She never can love him—unless her indifference melts. Bud woman ees as changeable as ze weazzer. No, I shall enlighten you no furzzer. I geev you ze *petit pois* to plant—ze little idea. Eet may grow—but, *le bon Dieu!* . . . what have we here?"

As he spoke, a constable, accompanied by a file of

soldiers, entered the smithy. Without parley, he advanced toward Pierre.

"Mister Peer Lafitte?" he asked.

Pierre nodded dumbly.

"I'm sory, sor, but yez'll have to come with me."

"I presume you are arresting me?" asked Pierre, in surprise.

"That I am, sor," replied the constable.

"But why have you arrested M'sieu Lafitte?" demanded the Creole authoritatively of the constable.

"What eez ze charge?"

The constable touched his cap and displayed a warrant. De Moulin read it attentively.

"What is it for?" asked Pierre.

De Moulin looked at him in exasperation.

"Eet ees—you are accused of being an accessaree to piracy!"

Pierre Dominique considered for a moment. They looked at each other.

"Let us go, then, and get the particulars."

"And I will go your bail!" cried François, gayly slipping his arm through Pierre's. "*Allons, mes gendarmes, à la calabosa!*"

And so, arm in arm, to the city prison, known by the euphonious title of the "calaboose," they marched, accompanied by the constable and his deputies.

At the station-house, however, they met with an unexpected difficulty.

The charges against Pierre, it seemed, were only as an accessory to piracy, but when the Creole asked to be told the amount of bail necessary to temporarily release Pierre from custody the police captain gave them a disconcerting reply.

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"By order of His Excellency the Governor himself," he said, "the prisoner must remain in custody until the day of trial and is allowed no bail whatsoever."

At this they were both taken back. De Moulin was furious.

"W'at you mean by zat?" he cried, "zat eez not law! I will give any amount you say!"

Smiling, the police captain informed him somewhat lengthily as to the intricacies of the law, but the Creole refused to listen. Imbued with hatred as he and his class were against the new government, this example of their tyranny, as he deemed it, only incensed him the more.

"*Sacré diable!* Ees zis a free government—a free law?" he cried.

The man at the desk said nothing.

"Hah, eet ees of no use to argue wiz you—you are but a servant." The police captain winced angrily at this. "I shall go to your superior—ze Governor—ze President heemself!"

The prisoner intervened.

"Go nowhere, François—but to Jean! Let him know of this!" said Pierre.

François de Moulin stared at him for a moment, and then, wringing his hand, left the room hurriedly, without a backward glance.

"This way, sor, if ye plaze," said O'Rourke, the constable, to Lafitte, and together they disappeared through the door leading to the cells.

CHAPTER THE TENTH:

*Wherein Twenty Thousand Dollars
Appears upon the Scene*

“**W**HY, my dear fellow, your contention is perfectly absurd! I am very much afraid, Grymes, that your ideas of jurisprudence and mine can never coincide. Why, take the speech of Sir Vickary Gibbs, the Royal Attorney General in the Court of the King’s Bench, delivered on November the twentieth, 1809, if I mistake not . . .”

“The devil take your exactness, Livingston! You’re always quoting some authority or another. But it’s useless to argue with you—you’ve always got an apt retort,” with a comical grimace.

Edward Livingston smiled. He was a tall, spare, silver-haired man, with bushy, grizzled eyebrows, a habitual contraction of the forehead, and the clearly cut features and haughty carriage of the born aristocrat. Known to be the most distinguished member of the Louisiana bar, together with the accrued prestige of his New York legal reputation, he was perhaps one of the best-informed men of his day. These were the days when every gentleman, apparently, was a lawyer or a politician.

“Grymes, the trouble with you is that you don’t read enough. You’re an excellent advocate, but a poor scholar. You would do well, I think, to read some of the letters to the Right Honorable Sir Joseph Banks, K. B., P. R. S. They are extremely interesting.” He paused. “Have you ever read Thomas Andrew Knight’s letter on ‘The Comparative Influence

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of Male and Female Parents on Their Offspring'? It is exceedingly—"

"—Dry, Livingston, no doubt of it!" responded Grymes, good-humoredly. "Personally, for entertainment, I prefer good old Boccaccio, or Rabelais..."

"No doubt!" dryly.

"Or an enjoyable hour with Margaret of Valois's *Heptameron*. To my mind, the *Decameron* and *Heptameron* are two of the most interesting books ever written!" He chuckled. "And, speaking of literary matters, when reading of the birth of Gargantua, have you *ever* read—"

Livingston frowned, displeased.

"I am surprised at your taste, Grymes. And you with a young daughter, at that."

Grymes laughed.

"Oh, Livingston, Livingston! You old-fashioned old fogey! Do you think that I could amuse myself, for a moment, by reading an old law tome or something equally thrilling? Not John Grymes—no, sir!"

Livingston was obviously piqued.

"Not necessarily. But why don't you read something more suitable for a man of your age? I'll send you over George Pryme's *Conquest of Canaan*. It was a Seatonian prize poem. I've just received it in response to my order on Cadell and Davies, of London. There is one passage in particular, Grymes, referring to the command of universal extirpation—"

Grymes held up his hand in humorous protest.

"My dear Livingston, you are incorrigible. But listen here—"

At this moment old Rappahannock, the Grymes butler, entered the book-lined, oak-paneled library.

"Massa Grymes! Massa Lafitte is in de droring-room."

Grymes turned in surprise.

"Which Mr. Lafitte, Rappahannock?"

"Massa Jean, suh."

Livingston and Grymes exchanged glances.

"He asted if Massa Livingston was heah, suh."

"Show him in here, Rappahannock." The old negro shuffled out.

Grymes turned to Livingston.

"Jean Lafitte in New Orleans!" he exclaimed.

"What is he doing here?"

Before his companion could answer, however, Lafitte himself entered and the two attorneys politely rose to their feet.

"Be seated, gentlemen," said Lafitte. "No, don't go, Mr. Livingston, I wish to see both of you gentlemen."

Without another word Grymes rang for Rappahannock, who answered the call a moment later.

"Rappahannock," said Grymes, "close the door and see that we are not disturbed. I am not at home to anyone."

Bowing, Rappahannock left the room, closing the double doors behind him.

"Gentlemen," said Lafitte, abruptly, after he had seated himself, "I have no doubt that you are aware of the fact that the Governor has seen fit to indict my associates and myself on a charge of piracy?"

Livingston merely nodded, his features impassive.

"Yes, I have heard it, Mr. Lafitte," said Grymes, "and I think His Excellency has acted very unwisely."

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He does not appreciate the delicate viewpoint which we Louisianians hold toward—er—”

“Privateering,” supplemented Jean, smiling.

“Precisely,” finished the district attorney, also smiling.

“However,” said Lafitte, “it may be possible that you gentlemen do not know that my brother has been placed under arrest.”

Both of his auditors started and exchanged quick glances.

“No, we do not,” answered Livingston. “On what charge has he been arrested?”

“On the charge of being an accessory to piracy. But that is not all, however. He has been refused bail.”

He paused, but received no answer. The two attorneys merely looked thoughtful.

“Therefore, gentlemen, I have come to you,” said Lafitte.

“Exactly what do you wish us to do?” asked Grymes, beginning to understand.

Jean Lafitte leaned back in his chair and smiled again.

“Just this, gentlemen. I will speak plainly; but first I’d better outline the situation. Governor Claiborne is not an antagonist to be despised. Glance over his record and you can readily see that.

“His Excellency has seen fit to institute legal proceedings, and has gone so far as to arrest my brother on a charge of complicity in piracy, without even extending him the courtesy—nay, the right, of giving bail! We, the privateers of Baratania, doing business in our own way as it is being done all over the

world to-day, have done naught thus far to interfere with the Governor. From now it is war to the knife, however. We shall fight this to a finish. We shall have justice!"

"Justice?" murmured Grymes to himself. He could not help thinking that justice was exactly what the Governor of Louisiana had in mind to mete out to the Baratarians, but in a very different sense than that, no doubt, meant by Lafitte. . . . However, notwithstanding his own sentiments in the matter, the chief of the "privateers" had come to him, professionally, it appeared, and therefore was protected by professional ethics. He was the district attorney, the representative of the commonwealth, the people. Should he listen further? It looked very much as if Lafitte was about to attempt to enlist his aid. Yet there was Livingston—

"And to get justice," went on Lafitte, "we must fight him with his own weapons. Legally. Therefore, gentlemen, knowing that you are the two ablest ornaments of the Louisiana bar, the Baratarians, whom I represent, wish you to do us the honor of accepting our case—to be our legal counsel in the coming trial."

It was as if a bombshell had fallen into the midst of the room, such a disturbing effect did it have on the distinguished "ornaments of the Louisiana bar." To say that they were surprised would be putting it mildly.

To Grymes, this offer was not wholly a surprise, but Livingston, strange to say, had not foreseen this as a result of Lafitte's opening remarks and was rather at a loss for words. Though not prejudiced or biased in the matter, he leaned toward the Baratarians' cause,

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yet rather felt as if he needed time to consider the proposal. Friendly though he was toward Lafitte, he was still a cautious man, and never made a decision until he had weighed the matter carefully in his mind and had resolved as to whether or not his decision would be either beneficial or detrimental to himself, one way or the other.

In this brief moment, before Lafitte had finished speaking, all this and more had swiftly passed through his brain. True to his nature, Edward Livingston was mentally debating this question: would it benefit him most to espouse the cause of Lafitte, popular as he was in New Orleans, or that of the Governor of Louisiana, who, after all, represented the law of the state?

Before he had time to make a decision, however, or even to further debate it within himself, he was arrested by Lafitte's next words.

"Gentlemen, I am not asking you to look at this offer from a biased viewpoint, one way or the other. This is purely a business matter and should be treated as such. If I am so fortunate as to possess your friendship, don't let that influence you. But, gentlemen, I hereby make this offer:

"If you will accept this case, which means to attempt to acquit my brother, my associates, and myself, from these infamous, unjust charges, I will—pay—you—each—the sum of—twenty—thousand—dollars, win or lose!"

If his earlier offer had had the effect of a bombshell, this last had that effect multiplied a hundredfold, a thousandfold. For a moment the two eminent law-

yers gazed at him dumbly, as if unable to believe their ears.

"Twenty thousand dollars?" cried the district attorney, gripping the arm of his chair.

"Twenty thousand dollars, win or lose!" gasped Edward Livingston, for once startled out of his invariable pose of impassivity.

Jean smiled and sipped the Burgundy in his glass.

"Twenty thousand dollars," he repeated. "And you can rely on the word of Jean Lafitte when he says that it will be paid promptly. I have a little habit of paying my debts," he added, whimsically.

"But that is a fortune!" cried Grymes, voicing Livingston's own thought. "It sounds impossible. Twenty thousand dollars!"

"*Parbleu! C'est vrai,*" said Lafitte, relapsing for the moment into French, "but nevertheless a fact. We Baratarians, you see, are willing to pay heavily to have our honor vindicated. What do you say, gentlemen? Do you accept? What is your decision? I do not like to hurry you, but time presses."

Edward Livingston looked at the floor for a moment, his face impassive, his brain hard at work. Then he looked up, glanced fleetingly at Grymes, and then looked Lafitte full in the face.

"I accept!" he said, quietly.

"*Bon!*" cried Jean, "I thank you! And you, Mr. Grymes?"

The district attorney was staring into his wine glass, his fingers beating a restless tattoo on the polished top.

In his mind's eye was that magic, "Twenty thousand dollars." To John Grymes, high-living and

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pleasure-loving as he was, and by no means well-off, twenty thousand dollars was simply—twenty thousand dollars. Still . . .

"I am the district attorney," he stated, looking questioningly at Lafitte. "How can I—"

Oh, the wonderful promise held forth by that twenty thousand dollars!

Lafitte laughed.

"That's easily enough dealt with," said he. "Simply resign!"

"Resign?" echoed Grymes. Why had he not thought of that? It was the simplest matter, after all, that. To resign. He could then accept the case—and the twenty thousand dollars. What couldn't he do with all that money, a bagatelle, apparently, to Lafitte, but in his present circumstances, unknown as they were to the rest of the world, a fortune to himself?

And then Livingston, the conservative, the former celebrity of the New York bar and at present equally well-known lawyer of the Louisiana bar, had accepted. If he, the respected Livingston—whom, truth to tell, Grymes held in some awe—had accepted, then why not he?

And Virginia, what of her? What mightn't he give her with that money?

"I accept," said Grymes, firmly, "and shall resign immediately."

Jean Lafitte smiled and shook him heartily by the hand.

"The present is the best time," he remarked. "Do so by all means."

For the next half hour the three men talked busi-

ness, going over the coming legal campaign as if they were a council of generals planning a battle. At the end of that period they arose, their compact was sealed in a toast, and then the group broke up. Lafitte and Livingston to go their respective ways, and Grymes to return to the large, oak-paneled library.

Sitting down to his large carved mahogany desk, he spent the next fifteen minutes in composing a letter. Sanding it, he waved it lightly back and forth in the air to assist the drying process and laid down his quill pen.

As he was thus occupied, he heard a step and looked up.

Entering the door was Virginia, charming in a simple but costly evening gown; a blood-red rose in her dark coiffure and her exquisite shoulders agleam in the light of the many candles in the wall sconces, with their twinkling pendant prisms. She was apparently returning from a dance, or a dinner perhaps. The social season of "Little Paris" was at its hectic height.

As she stopped to kiss her father, Virginia noticed the letter he had written and, woman-like, was at once curious to know what it contained, not really expecting to be told. For once, however, she was agreeably disappointed. Smiling, Grymes handed it to her, and she, proceeding to put on a charmingly business-like air, began to read it through. Before she had finished, however, the laughter left her face.

"What does this mean, father?" she asked, her voice troubled.

Grymes assumed a casualness he did not at all feel.

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"Just what it says, Jinny. It is my resignation. I am giving up my post as district attorney."

She looked vaguely uneasy.

"But why, father? You tried so hard to get this office. Why do you resign?"

"Listen, Jinny. Mr. Livingston and I are to be the legal counsel of Mr. Lafitte."

"Mr. Lafitte?"

"Yes. Pierre Lafitte has been arrested."

"Pierre? What for?"

"Don't ask so many questions, puss, and I'll tell you. As you know, the Lafittes have been indicted for piracy. The Governor had Pierre arrested. Well, his brother was here and asked that Livingston and I take the case. We accepted."

"But why?"

"What do you mean, Jinny? He merely offered us the case, and after due consideration we accepted."

"But you cannot; you are the district attorney!"

"That's why I am resigning, dear," indulgently.

"But, father, why have you taken this case? Why have you resigned? What influenced you? There must have been something to make you defend this murd—I mean, this Mr. Lafitte."

"Isn't Pierre Lafitte a friend of yours? Wouldn't you like me to get him out of jail?" asked the masculinely subtle Grymes, understanding her aversion toward Jean.

"Why, of course! But still, it wasn't necessary for you to resign, to help him, was it? And besides, he has his brother. They are rich enough to protect themselves. And you—you must depend on your salary. You know you wouldn't take a cent of the

money mother left me, although I've begged you to. Don't you think that charity begins at home?" she ended, pleadingly.

He shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"That's why I am resigning, Jinny. Charity does begin at home. And that's why Livingston took the case, too. I know. Rich as he is, twenty thousand dollars isn't to be despised!"

"Twenty thousand dollars? What do you mean?" she asked, in surprise.

"Just what I say. Lafitte offered us each twenty thousand dollars, if we would take the case. And we accepted. After all, twenty thousand dollars is a fortune."

"Oh, father, how *could* you?" she asked, her cheeks glowing.

He looked at her in astonishment, and with well-masked trepidation, it may be admitted.

"What do you mean, Jinny?" sharply.

"How could you take that pirate's blood money? The money he made out of human flesh, out of the bodies and souls of poor negro slaves!" she cried, flaming. "This terrible slave trade should be abolished—destroyed! And instead of that—what do men do? They smuggle them, like silks and tea and wine, and mistreat and beat them! And this pirate . . . he is worse! And yet you will defend him?"

"And what about your precious Pierre Lafitte?" demanded Grymes. "He is no better than his brother, if you regard it in that light. He is just as much of a pirate, as you call them. Yet *you* are defending him! Just because Jean, however, had the misfortune to kill two men, both of whom attempted

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to take his life, as I've been told by reliable persons, you call him a murderer! And after he saved your life! That's not like you at all! I told you, Virginia, not to pay any attention to what Margaret Claiborne tells you. Her father is the man who sent Pierre to jail without bail and is their deadly enemy! How can you expect him to speak well of the Lafittes?"

Virginia listened to her father's angry peroration in silence. He, however, could not know of what she was thinking—of the story of the slave girl—for whose possession Jean had supposedly killed Grambo, the quadroon.

"I don't care!" she cried, passionately, "I hate him . . . despise him . . . loathe him! And both you and that supercilious Mr. Livingston ought to be ashamed to have any dealings with him! The . . . the . . ." She broke off abruptly. "I warn you, father, that no good will come of this. Don't resign—don't!" Her eyes glistened, tearful, pleading.

He did not answer her this time, however.

Folding the resignation, he placed it in an envelope, addressed it, sealed it, and rang for the butler.

A moment later old Rappahannock entered.

"Rappahannock," said Grymes, without looking at Virginia, "see that this letter is delivered to Judge Linwood the first thing in the morning. That is all." The old butler, with a glance at the silent Virginia, took the letter and, bowing, shuffled out of the room, closing the door behind him.

No sooner had he left, however, than Virginia followed him to the door.

"Good night, father," she said, listlessly, and was gone.

TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS

John Grymes stared at the closed door, the muscles of his face tense. For the first time in her life Virginia had not kissed him good-night and suddenly, inexplicably, without being able to understand it himself, he found himself thinking of her long-dead mother. After all these years . . .

Dropping into his armchair, he filled his glass from the decanter of Burgundy on the table, and drank it down. Staring into the dying fire in the huge fireplace, he drank another, and another and another.

The candles began to gutter out. Weird shadows furtively stalked the circumambient gloom.

Plans, projects—gold. Exaltation. . . .

A few words from youthful lips—lips framing the hymnus of youth, the gladness of life. Words vibrant with the honesty, the unhypocriticalness of youth. Stinging, damning words.

Walking to the window, John Grymes stared out into the velvet chalice of the night, drenched in magic and moonlight.

Twenty thousand dollars?

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH:

*How a District Attorney
Receives an Insult
and Monsieur de Moulin Tweaks
the Nose of an American*

I

THE court-room was crowded, for it was the first day of the trial of Pierre Lafitte.

Though the air was soft and balmy, the large chamber itself was hot, and the discomfort was not lessened by the heterogeneous crowd that filled the benches, rear aisles, and balcony.

Grymes and Livingston sat together at one end of the long oak table reserved for counsel. At the foot of the table sat the new district attorney, Grymes's successor, one Herbert Hemingway; a short, squat, overdressed man, clean-shaven, and painfully concise in his speech. Hemingway was a Pennsylvanian, of some merit as a lawyer, with a large amount of ambition and a larger meed of vanity. He had been Grymes's rival when that gentleman first ran for the office of district attorney, but was defeated. However, being a henchman of Governor Claiborne and thus influential to a certain degree, he had become assistant district attorney, after certain devious maneuverings for which the worthy chief executive was noted.

Jealous and morose by nature, Hemingway had bided his time. Now, due to the resignation of Grymes, he had succeeded him in office. Great was

his joy when he discovered that Grymes, himself, was to be his first opponent in the exercise of his new office, and his cup of happiness was fairly brimming when he learned the identity of the client of the former district attorney, despite the fact that with Grymes was allied the redoubtable Edward Livingston.

Hemingway smiled maliciously as he looked across the table at his former chief, and the look in his eye boded no good for the Virginian. Of all this, however, Grymes was happily unconscious. Conversing in low tones with Livingston, running through his portfolio and occasionally answering the nod of an acquaintance in the audience with a cordial smile, he seemed oblivious of the existence of his former assistant.

Suddenly the buzz of conversation subsided, for the judge had entered, and the crowd made obeisance, all rising and standing until the court was formally opened and then resuming their seats in an attitude of curious expectancy.

The trial of the People of the State of Louisiana *versus* Pierre Lafitte had begun. Then followed the tedious process of impaneling the jury, but finally Herbert Hemingway, the new prosecuting attorney, rose to his feet and, ostentatiously clearing his throat, began the opening address.

And thus the first day.

II

The third day of the trial had come, and with it a crisis.

During the first two days nothing of any note had taken place. The general consensus of opinion was

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in favor of Pierre Lafitte. But the State, in the person of Hemingway, was by no means discouraged.

The general public well knew that the issue was not merely a question of Pierre Lafitte being an accessory to piracy. A far greater principle was at stake. The outcome of this trial would decide one thing, above all others. It would determine the further status of the Baratarians—whether they were to bear the appellation of “pirates” and thus bring upon themselves, legally, official condemnation, together with punishment to the full extent of the law—the death penalty; or whether the Baratarians, which included, most naturally, one Monsieur Jean Lafitte, would be honorably cleared and thus enabled to continue their careers as respectable “privateers.”

Public opinion in New Orleans was most decidedly in on channel. The majority of the inhabitants—merchants, bankers, professionals and prominent citizens—Creoles and natives for the most part—were strong adherents to the cause of the Baratarians. And a large majority of the State Legislature were also in this class.

Nor was this state of affairs unnatural. A large number were connected in some way with the smugglers, and many, together with the whole of the lower portion of the state, were greatly benefited by their presence and activities. Then again, the Creoles cordially disliked the new régime and all its works, notwithstanding the fact that many of them served in the State Legislature. Therefore, they had all the more reason to be friendly toward the Lafittes and their followers.

On the other hand, the newcomers, the Americans,

were for the most part disliked and sided instinctively with the Governor and his followers. This may be due to the inherent loyalty to government that was instinctive—a feeling that, not long after, was planted and nourished in the hearts of the Creoles. The latter transformation, however, did not take place until those stirring days of the British attack on New Orleans.

Therefore, the friends and enemies of the Lafittes were ranged on two sides and the supporters of the Baratarians were undoubtedly the most numerous.

By the third day of the trial, the battle between the lawyers, Livingston and Grymes, on one side, and Hemingway and his battery of assistants, on the other, had become heated. It was not long before personalities were indulged in, as witness after witness was called, examined, cross-examined and questioned again.

Hemingway was speaking on a question of law.

“And so, if we are at variance,” he cried, turning now and again to the jury, but addressing the main body of his remarks full at his rival—“if we are at variance, I say, it is because the question under discussion is not fully understood.” He paused, breathing heavily, and stared balefully at the debonair Grymes. “Nor should I expect it to be understood, nor appreciated,” he went on, “for it would take a gentleman, who has the understanding and sensibilities of gentlemen, to comprehend it.”

There was a well-defined stir in the jury box. A rustle of whisperings swept over the crowded body of the large chamber, while His Honor noticeably gave a start.

This was nothing less than a direct fling at his opponents, a gratuitous insult.

Livingston was thoroughly angry, but wise enough to repress his emotions. Before he could make any movement toward reprimanding the prosecution, his colleague was on his feet, an ugly glitter in his usually kind eyes.

"Am I to understand," asked Grymes, quietly, though boiling inwardly, "that you intimate that counsel for the defense are not gentlemen?"

The judge made a motion toward Hemingway, but he, apparently, was ignorant of it. Livingston began to rise. A sudden hush came over the great room—a frozen silence, fraught with unimaginable possibilities.

Hemingway leered.

"Exactly!" he exclaimed, venomously, "although I had but one person in mind. The other I hold in the highest respect." He half bowed to Livingston. The latter spoke before the enraged Grymes could answer, his voice icy.

"Kindly explain yourself, sir!" said he sternly. The judge nodded, but no one noticed him.

Hemingway drew a long breath and then took the plunge. He had stepped into the Rubicon. He must cross it now or drown.

"Just what I said," he ejaculated, half frightened at his own temerity in thus bearding the two distinguished attorneys. "And I will not retract a word! Mr. Grymes," he said, sternly, looking at that individual, "I hereby repeat my belief that you are not a gentleman!"

For a moment Grymes merely stared at him, too astonished at this sudden, unwarrantable charge, to

answer it, if that were possible. Hemingway rushed on, with a pseudo-fury.

"No, Mr. Grymes, you are not a gentleman . . . for you are without honor! You, who have bartered it, sold it to the highest bidder, for twenty thousand pieces of silver. Mr. Grymes, as God is my witness, I am ashamed to think of ever having been associated with you, who have stepped from the path of honor, bribed by pirate gold!"

It was out!

Within his soul John Grymes, laughed, ironically, bitterly. The fee for which he had resigned his honored office was indeed twenty thousand silver pieces. And now it was denounced as a bribe! Thoughts passed like lightning through his brain as he stared, unseeing, almost uncomprehending, at the sneering figure of his accuser. And then a truly royal rage filled the soul of the hot-headed Virginian. For a moment a murderous glint sparkled in his eye. To be thus accused, thus branded, in the presence of all New Orleans—all the world! He, John Grymes, a Virginian of the old Cavalier stock, to be thus insulted, thus held up to the scorn of a relentless world, the cynosure of cynical eyes. He rocked in the throes of an internal tempest that threatened to uproot the very moorings of his soul.

There was but one thing to be done and he did it.

Half suffocating with rage, his eyes flashing, and an unconquerable sob welling up in his throat, he threw the gauntlet into the enemy's teeth. There was only one way out.

"Mr. Hemingway," he exclaimed, acutely conscious of the fact that all eyes were focused upon him,

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"gentleman or not, you must give me satisfaction for this or I will horsewhip you to death on the Place d'Armes!"

The prosecuting attorney bowed, ostensibly ironical, but in reality sick at heart. Strange as it was, he had not counted on this. Duels were but survivals of a barbarous age, he had always maintained . . . the practice which merely enabled obscure nonentities to challenge, and perhaps kill, prominent men—really great men. But he could not withdraw with honor. If he did, he would be forever disgraced.

"I am entirely at your service, sir," he said, determined to make the best of it. "Your most obedient!" He bowed again, but his lips were gray.

"My friend will call on you—on anyone you designate," returned Grymes, as courteously as possible, though striving mightily to control his temper. Then, because he could trust himself no longer, he faced the judge, muttered something unintelligible, and, turning around, walked slowly up the main aisle of the courtroom, head high and chin thrust outward. John R. Grymes was undoubtedly a thoroughbred.

A redbird, perched on the branch of a magnolia, just outside the courthouse, chirped loudly, calling to its mate.

Herbert Hemingway stared for a moment at the retreating figure of the man to whom he had just offered a deadly insult, and then slumped into his chair, his gaze on the floor. He was learning that a gesture was very satisfying for the moment but very dangerous in its after effects.

Edward Livingston, with a contemptuous look at the prosecuting attorney, pointedly gathered up his

papers, arose from the table, and walked across the inclosure to a side table. The insinuation was obvious.

The judge took this opportunity to announce an adjournment. But when the great room had emptied, he still sat there, under the great stained-glass window, the bars of colored sunlight slanting across his robes in billets and lozenges of vert and gule and azure.

His Honor was sore perplexed. But so was New Orleans.

III

"Meestaire Nash," said De Moulin, "I understand zat you are ze gent'man who ees ze secon' of Monsieur—pardon, sair, I meant 'Meestaire' Hemingway, ees eet not true?"

Cyrus Nash, a broad-shouldered, blue-eyed Yankee giant, nodded and glanced across the room at his principal.

Herbert Hemingway, standing at a long French window which gave egress to a balcony overlooking the Rue Royale, wheeled, but was silent.

"I am the representative of Mr. Hemingway," said Nash, loftily, "and I presume you are the representative of Mr. Grymes?"

"Correc', sair, *c'est vrai*. I 'ave ze honnaire of being a secon' of my frien,' Monsieur Grymes. I 'ave come to arrange ze mitting of owêh preëncipals on ze fiel' *d'honneur!*" He glanced across at Hemingway, who, rigid, his hand gripping the back of an armchair, stared at him strangely.

"Quite so," replied the Yankee. "We . . . I—have been expecting you. But, Mister dee Moolan, can we

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not reach an understanding in some other way?" He glanced at Hemingway, who almost imperceptibly nodded.

The young indigo-planter drew himself up.

"Pardon, monsieur, I do not understan'. If Monsieur weel 'ave ze kin'nez to exbhlain."

"I mean, mister, can't we settle this some other way? My principal would prefer not to fight—"

"Ees you' preincipal a coward?" demanded the Creole, astonished.

The other hastily made a sign of deprecating negation.

"Of course not!" he cried. "Only Mr. Hemingway would dislike the—er—publicity that would unavoidably become connected with this affair. He would prefer—"

Hemingway leaned forward, his voice somewhat strained.

"What my good friend means, sir," he said, "is that I am very strongly opposed to dueling, to personal chastisement—er—encounters, of such a murderous nature. In my opinion, sir, it is a barbarity, the relic of a depraved and uncivilized age! It would be against my principles, my ideals—"

"Ees eet zat monsieur wish' to refuse Monsieur Grymes *l'amende honorable*?" the Creole cried, aghast. His chivalric soul could not understand such idealistic scruples, such a Puritanical conscience.

For a moment Hemingway was at a loss. The Yankee sought to remedy the situation.

"Look here, mister; Mister Hemingway is not afraid to fight, not by a damn sight—"

"Ah, zen monsieur wish' to 'pologize? Pardon,

messieurs, *Que je suis bête!* . . . 'Ow stupid h'I am! Eef Meestaire Hemingway weel 'pologize, re-trac', mek ze *amende honorable*, zat ees altogether anozzer 'ting. I 'ave no doubt zat Meestaire Grymes weel consent to conseeder eet! Monsieur Livin'ston, he sayce to me—"

The district attorney held up his hand, and his face wore an air of dignity.

"I—I have no intention of apologizing," he said, calmly, although his heart was beating furiously. And he murmured to himself, "The Lord knows I cannot!"

The Creole looked frankly bewildered. He looked from one to the other.

"Zen what in ze name of ze thousand devils do you mean to do?" he queried, in exasperation.

Hemingway was thinking rapidly. There was nothing to be done, after all, he thought, but give in with the best grace possible. For all his faults, Herbert Hemingway was somewhat of a sportsman . . . a gambler, with all the varying moods of men who are born to be eternally doomed to indecision. His lips whitened.

"You are right, Mr. de Moulin, you are right! I cannot but give your principal the satisfaction that he demands . . . though it cost me my life. God knows that it is only a farce, this dueling—this official murder—but I shall not back out; I shall fight . . . if need be, die!

"But I still maintain," he continued, grasping this opportunity for a sly thrust, "that your principal is no gentleman and should not even be given this opportunity to—er—fight, as gentlemen do, since he has forfeited the right to put himself in that class through his

dishonorable dealings with those pirates, of which I—er—fearlessly,” he mouthed the word, “accused him! Do you still think I am afraid to fight, sir?” he cried, waving his hand in an assumption of dignity, “when I have the moral courage to accuse this fire-eating, swashbuckling Virginian to his face, before his fellow-citizens and fellow-dupes?”

“I would hardly cayeh to say,” rejoined the Creole, dryly, his eyes showing his utter contempt.

“Mister Hemingway is right,” suddenly interjected the last-named gentleman’s self-styled second, “neither he nor anyone else is afraid of this shyster, this Judas. I believe in calling a spade a spade. Mr. Grymes is not only working for these pirates, for blood money, but it’s my belief that he’s a smuggler, himself!

“Personally, Mister dee Moolan, I wouldn’t lower myself to fight with Mr. Grymes, myself. He’s no gentleman, as Hemingway—”

The Creole turned on him in a flash, his fine sensibilities infuriated at the liberties being taken with him in his character of ambassador.

“But I’m zhure you’ll have no objection to mitting me!” he snapped, enraged. “François de Moulin ees at you’ sairvice h’at any time . . . an’ at any man’s! But wait—I meestake—I mean at ze sairvice of any gentleman. But for such *canaille* as you, monsieur, I only use my cane!”

Before his surprised auditors could recover from the effect of his only too justifiable wrath, the zealous young Creole had leaned over and tweaked the prominent nose of the Yankee!

Cursing obscenely, the infuriated Nash sprang at him, but he was stopped by Hemingway.

"Here, gentlemen, here!" the latter cried. "This is no time for quarreling. Let us finish this unpleasant business! Nash, be quiet!" There was a ring of command in his voice. The Yankee subsided, strangely enough, and glowered at the young Creole, who, regaining his composure, was superbly oblivious of him.

"As the challenged party," said the district attorney, "of course I have choice of weapons?"

"*Oui, monsieur, zat ees ze propaire etiquette,*" said De Moulin, soberly, "ze choice ees yours!"

For once Hemingway dropped his habitual indecision. An observer would have thought that he was the second in this case, rather than the principal, so cool and matter-of-fact was his demeanor.

"Well, then, I choose pistols. And the usual place, I suppose. I believe that is Slaughterhouse Point, is it not?"

The young planter nodded mutely.

"And, if it will not inconvenience your principal," went on Hemingway, "I would like the meeting to take place at dawn. Let us have it over with as quickly as possible."

De Moulin bowed.

"Zat ees pairfectly sateesfactory," he answered. "Meestaire Grymes, he sayce, '*Mon ami*, mek all arrangements. I leave zem to you.' At dawn, zen, shall it be."

The district attorney bowed in turn.

"Thank you for calling, Mr. de Moulin. We shall meet in the morning, I trust."

"*Trés bien,*" returned the Creole. "In ze morning zen." He turned to leave the room.

At this point, however, Nash interrupted.

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"Wait, Mr. dee Moolan," he cried, pointing to his nose. "What about this? What about this, sir?" he choked with rage.

François de Moulin laughed.

"*Le nez, mon ami?*" he asked, mockingly, "w'at about eet? *Eh, bien*, my opinion, monsieur, eet ees razzer objec'sh'n'able to zee eye. Take my advice, Meestaire Nash, and remove eet!" He laughed debonairly.

A moment later and he was gone.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH:

*In Which Is Related an Account
of the Duel at Slaughterhouse
Point, and How Virginia
Flirts with Profit*

I

MORNING was nearing its dreary dawn, cold and dark, and New Orleans slumbered.

At last the red rim of the rising sun, heralded by the misty flush of sunrise behind the forests lining the shores of Lake Pontchartrain, appeared above the level disk and cast its first sleepy rays on the world—the long, refuse-littered levees of the queenly Mississippi; the red tile roofs of the Franco-Spanish houses of stuccoed brick; the wide, deserted avenues, lined with balconies, through whose long French windows could be had glimpses of lace curtains and brocade upholstery; and the high white spire of St. Louis Cathedral, which benignantly looked down on the awakening city from its lofty, kindly height.

On a long point of land to the northwest of the city, surrounded on three sides by the muddy, swirling waters of the Queen of Rivers and thickly wooded with dark palmettos and white-blossomed magnolias that stood out in clear-cut picturesque silhouette against the sky, was a spacious glade, alive with bright-colored flowers, warmly green climbing vines, mossy natural lawns of cocoa grass, and ablush with flowering trees.

This bit of paradise on earth, however, was some-

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what euphoniously known to the natives as "Slaughterhouse Point," and not without reason, for this fair spot was in truth a slaughterhouse, a human abattoir, as some had bitterly called it.

Many a strong man, pulsing one moment with life, love, and passion, had watered the greensward with his blood the next; and many a loving wife or sweetheart, mother or sister, had suffered in consequence.

And with good reason, for Slaughterhouse Point was *the* dueling ground of the gay capital of the Louisianians, of the Little Paris of the New World. Here the Spanish grandees had settled their quarrels with the clash of steel and skill of wrist, to be followed by the debonair French chevaliers' light rapiers, and the more modern pistol bullets of the punctilious Creole.

What countless tales might those age-old trees tell if they could but speak! Of the grievous—and fancied—wrongs wiped out in blood . . . of the strange outcomes, of the counter-duels . . . of the hesitant confession of the dying, and the blessed administration of the father confessors, brokenly bestowing absolution

These and much more might these old trees have told, but they could only tell their tales by the rustlings of their limbs and the sighing of their leaves, which language is only too unfortunately beyond the human capacity for understanding.

By now, however, the principals of this dramatic little incident in American history had assembled and were all too impatiently awaiting the further rising of the huge celestial orb that was to aid with her light the purpose of two of their number, each determined

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to slay the other, one to avenge his honor, the other to protect himself from that well-merited vengeance.

Of all this, and much more, doubtless, both the former and present district attorneys were thinking. Men think strange thoughts at times like these, but it is stranger still that no one is conscious of it—least of all, themselves.

They were all there.

Herbert Hemingway, clad in ultra-fashionable clothes; beaver, lace ruffles, et cetera, as if just about to set out for a quadroon ball at the St. Philippe Street Theater; and his second, Mr. Cyrus Nash, Esquire, lately of Kennesetock Point, New Hampshire, also loudly dressed, with much more ostentation but equally much less taste than his principal, have just arrived on the scene, and are leaving the carriage of the former, on the road just outside the historic glade.

John Grymes, together with Monsieur François de Moulin, are already on the scene and are standing a little to the right of a giant magnolia, conversing in low tones.

This does not complete the party, however. Two men, obviously physicians, are standing in and aside, also busying themselves in the mysterious depths of two little valises. Mr. Grymes, while talking to his second, watches these two gentlemen of the lancet, and cannot help feeling a certain fascination in doing so, although this is not the Virginian's first duel.

The former district attorney had passed a sleepless night, sitting up in the library, eying a wine decanter that he dared not touch, yet whose contents he craved with all his soul. He had been wise enough, however, to withstand the temptation, and had spent his time at

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solitaire, which could not keep him from thinking of a woman who slept in a Virginian churchyard—of bygone days. John Grymes spent much time with his thoughts of late; thoughts dug out of secret mental archives.

Therefore he is fit, this morning, and his eye and nerve are steady. It speaks well for the hard-living Virginian that he did not remove the tempting decanter all through the night, but left it, with its mute appeal, to stare him in the face until the gray hours of dawn, to be finally interrupted by the advent of faithful Scipio, coming to reawaken the slumbering embers in the huge old fireplace.

That gentleman of color, already introduced to the reader in the episode of the runaways, is now unobtrusively hidden behind the generous bole of a magnolia, waiting, round-eyed, to see the outcome of the master's fight.

He is not the only observer, however.

Slaughterhouse Point, as is known, was already famed for its duels, and often held large crowds, especially when the duelists were prominent persons.

This case was no exception to the rule.

Insulted as he had been before a crowded court, an assemblage of well-known citizens, it was inevitable that all New Orleans would anticipate a duel, and half of its male population attend, if possible. It was equally easy for anyone to guess the location of the coming encounter. Such personal meetings were very seldom held in any other place but Slaughterhouse Point.

Therefore, quite a large gathering has assembled. This heterogeneous crowd is largely made up of the

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Creole gentry, prominent bankers, merchants, and others of that class; but there are also a sprinkling of Americans, friends of both combatants. There is no likelihood of interference on the part of the local authorities. No Creole would dream of interfering in an affair of honor, while an American official, if he did hold personal views about the wisdom of dueling, discreetly shut his official eyes, especially if present.

At last the preliminaries have been settled.

The sun has risen in its glorious entirety and flooded the grove with its golden light. Out on the sparkling, muddy Mississippi a river barge has come to anchor. One sees that it holds a goodly crowd of gentlemen, all of whom, apparently, have an excellent view of the proceedings.

Gone indeed are the days when affairs of honor were purely personal encounters between the two principals, to be conducted as privately as possible. In these times one cannot even fight privately, cry the Creoles, without making a large public spectacle. It is all the cursed ideas of this new hare-brained government, they declare in unison. In the olden days; ah, then gentlemen were *gentlemen* . . .

Yet these same aristocratic ranters cannot keep away from a duel, if they are remotely interested in it. So it goes . . .

The principals are in their places, pistols in hand, with their coats and beavers lying on the sward . . . their sleeves rolled up . . . ruffles loosened.

Old Sieur de la Follette, veteran of a hundred duels, is to give the word.

He raises his elegantly shaped hand, still ungnarled by the hand of Time. Apparently the last-named old

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gentleman has passed him by out of pure respect for his many praiseworthy qualities (so say the Creoles, at least)—for his love of sport, his gameness, his keen sense of honor, his scrupulous sense of fairness . . . all these go toward the making up of old Etienne de la Follette, prince of duelists, with twenty duels and fourteen love affairs to his credit.

It is said, secretly, of course, that he was once the lover of a *duchesse*. No wonder he is held with such respect in the dreamy land of the Creoles! It is such as he that remind us of duels in the moonlight; serenades under trellised balconies; black-eyed demoiselles and peruked gallants; balls, fêtes, levées; grand bediamonded dames; scented, bejeweled fops.

The Sieur de la Follette is a human milestone in history.

But we digress!

The Sieur raises his hand.

A dead silence falls on the crowd.

The duelists, back to back, walk ten paces from each other, and halt, pistol in hand.

Hemingway is white-faced; his eyes glittering, a hectic flush in his pale cheek. Grymes is cool, collected, and his face is as stern as that of the great Roman father who ordered the death of his own son. The honor of a Virginian, a Grymes, is no small thing. Beware who shalt presume to besmirch it! It is the Grymes way to wipe out an insult in blood. An exaltation—a lust to kill—fills him; thrills him.

The white-haired nobleman with the gray imperial speaks:

"Un—Deux—Trois!"

As a man they wheel about, pistols extended.

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Two shots are heard as one. Hemingway has fired first, Grymes an instant later

The crowd peers through the haze.

The smoke clears quickly. One of the duelists, dropping his smoking weapon, clutches at his side, makes a half turn, and crumples up on the green turf, to lie there inert. The other stands for a moment—straight, stern, with the mien of an avenging god—for a moment only. Then, throwing aside his still smoking instrument of death, he quickly reaches the side of his former opponent.

For one moment the heart of John Grymes is like a frozen stone . . . Has he killed his man? After all, flashes through his mind, the district attorney but stood up for the courage of his convictions. The Virginian cannot help but admire that sort of man. And now that he has apparently killed his adversary, it is the nature of the high-strung Grymes to glorify his enemy. His mood of exaltation has dropped from him like a cloak—his lust for revenge vanished into thin air.

But Hemingway is not dead.

The doctors have quickly taken charge and are making an examination. The senior physician, a tall, baldish man, looks up to meet the mute question in Grymes's eyes.

"He will live, sir," says he, "but the ball has gone through his hip. Mr. Hemingway will be crippled for life!" He turns back to his patient.

John Grymes stares down at the body of his enemy for a moment, his face impassive. Then, without a word, he turns, slowly puts on his coat and hat, and, followed by De Moulin, enters his carriage. The

proud Scipio, fairly radiating joy, cracks his whip over the heads of the blacks. The carriage quickly disappears down the road, headed south, for New Orleans.

There is now a general exodus.

The motionless figure of the unconscious district attorney is carried to the carriage and is rapidly driven away toward town, followed, at intervals, by a string of horseback riders and carriages.

The barge on the river hauls up its anchor and soon disappears downstream, vanishing behind a bend of cottonwoods.

Slaughterhouse Point is again deserted; steeped in the flaming radiance of the newly-risen sun.

The sighing magnolias have a new tale to add to their repertory.

II

“Not guilty!”

A gasp was heard, followed by roll after roll of applause as the frantic crowd rose to its feet.

Never before, perhaps, in its whole history, had that old court-room seen such a demonstration as was taking place now . . . a demonstration that, rising to the roof, seemed to be literally flying over the town.

And well might the audience cheer, for Pierre Lafitte is acquitted.

But it is not the mere fact that the brother of the *bosse* of Barataria has been acquitted of a grave charge that causes such a commotion in the good city of New Orleans. Something of more moment than that had hung on the decision of those twelve tried men and true: the further legitimate existence of the colony of Grande Terre.

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And the primary causes of all this excitement, Messrs. Edward Livingston and John Grymes, are receiving their share and more of the congratulations that are pouring on the heads of the victors of this legal battle. For have not these two eminent lawyers cleared their poor, innocent, persecuted clients of the utterly unfounded and absolutely preposterous charges brought against them? And (whisper it, *mon ami*) have not these paragons of the bar, these advocates *par excellence*, discreetly taught them certain legal tricks whereby they can still continue to do business at the same spot, and yet make a *pied-de-nez* . . . a thumb to the nose . . . and say, "Pouf! That for you!" to the Government?

Yes, they have done this, and much more beside, and now they stand, each flanking the triumphant victim of the malignity of a despotic government, and modestly receive the plaudits of their friends. How fortunate has Pierre Lafitte been to have such powerful defenders . . . men with tongues of silvery eloquence! And how wise was the great Jean Lafitte when he secured their aid! With what magnificent oratory did the grandiloquent Livingston assail the ears of His-Honor-on-the-Bench! With what marvelous shrewdness did Grymes argue for long hours with that round dozen of blockheads in the jury-box! Ah, it was a treat to listen to them, *mes amis*, a precious boon! Monsieur Grymes? *Il fut une merveille!* Monsieur Livingston? *Il fut magnifique!* Oh, là là! What a rolling of Creole eyes! . . . What ecstasies of admiration! . . .

What gallant badinage—sallies—laborious repartee!

What a glorious victory for our friends! What humiliation for this upstart government!

And (between you and me, *mon ami*), what a blow to the pride—the haughty self-sufficiency—of his most respected Excellency, *Monsieur le gouverneur*!

“*C’est pour rire!*”

It is to laugh, indeed. . . .

“Not guilty!”

III

“Ah, Mr. Lafitte, you are a flatterer!”

“‘Pierre’!”

“Well, Pierre, then . . . since you are so insistent. But I warn you, sir, I do not believe a word you say!”

“But I swear I am in earnest, *ma belle*!”

She tapped him chidingly on the shoulder with her fan. From their seat in the trellised, jasmine-covered arbor could be seen the moving figures of the dancers in the candle-lighted ballroom, multiplied a thousand-fold by the flashing mirrors on the walls . . . an orgy of color, a pandemonium of merriment.

The strains of a dreamy waltz floated out to them, haunting—ethereal—unreal. The soaring moon, a glorious disk of silver in a sky of royal purple—a cupola of basalt—the twinkling stars, friendly celestial chinks of light, therein . . . the balmy, scent-laden air . . . all contributed to make of this Southern desmesne a fairyland—a night for love—and love—and naught but love. The moonlight lay like snow on the silver-misted foliage. . . .

Virginia Grymes, clad in an eye-arresting gown of shimmering, filmy, gauze-like material, the make-up of which no mere man knows, laughed. Her companion,

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Pierre Dominique Lafitte, a gallant figure in cambric frills and claret-colored damask, bent toward her, intoxicated by the glamour of the night—the challenge of her eyes—the appeal of her feminine charm. . . .

“Oh, Virginia, you are cruel . . . heartless! You cannot doubt me! I insincere? Pierre Lafitte? What—”

She looked at him, her eyes roguish.

“Pierre, do you love me?”

“*Do I love you? Do I love you? Why you are my dream—my star—my—*”

“Really?” amusedly.

“Ah, mademoiselle, you jest. But I am not like your cold-blooded Americans. We Frenchmen hold *la grande passion* above everything! After all, *ma belle* Virginia, love is the greatest of all things. We were born to love. And love really comes but once to us . . . and it comes to stay. . . . Virginia, that great love has come into my life. And you are the cause of it—its *raison d'être!*”

“Platitudes, sir, mere platitudes!”

“But it is the truth!”

“Enough of these fine words, Monsieur Lafitte. I believe in deeds, not words.”

The protecting darkness concealed her flush as her mind reverted back to a certain day not long past when a man with coal-black eyes stood in the path of an on-coming carriage, pistol in hand.

“Mademoiselle pleases to jest,” sulkily.

“Jest? No, I do not. But, there, sir, you are but a sulky cavalier. Are you that way with all of your friends? With Gabrielle—and Céleste—and Angélique? . . .” She laughed lightly.

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The Frenchman started in surprise.

"Gabrielle—Angélique!" he stammered. "What do you know of Angélique?"

Suddenly light came to him.

"What has François de Moulin been telling you?" he demanded.

"There, there," she teased, "don't fly into such a rage. 'Twill spoil your handsome brow."

He all but gnashed his teeth in exasperation. If thoughts could kill, a certain young indigo-planter would have died a horrible death at that moment. Fortunately for the latter, however, this is both a physical and psychological impossibility. And it is better so perhaps, for if such thought-murder were possible, it is doubtful if the world would be as populous as it is.

Virginia shook her finger at him reprovingly.

"I dare you to mention a word of it to poor François," she said. "You yourself have often said 'all's fair in love and war.'"

He stared at the frivolous stars, disdaining to answer. If he could but lay his hands on his friend, it would be a "war" indeed; perhaps premeditated murder.

To his relief, she turned the subject. This was not altogether an act of mercy, had he known it, but a seizure of just this opportunity to discuss the man whom she professed to dislike above all men.

"By the way, Mr. Lafitte—Pierre—I have never really met your brother, have I? What sort of a man is he?" Casually. Too casually, perhaps.

"Jean? He's a prince. Why, he—"

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"Why doesn't he mingle with people more than he does? I very seldom see him."

He considered this for a moment.

"Society? Why he does, when he's in town. But of late he's been away so often, and for such long periods, that, no doubt, since you are but a recent arrival, you haven't seen him about much. Jean is very popular around town, however. Much more, I am forced to admit, than my humble self. And very naturally," he added, loyally.

She ignored this, however.

"I suppose your brother is as much of a heart-breaker as yourself, then," she remarked with an assumed lightness.

For a moment he was strangely silent.

"I have never known Jean to look at a woman twice," he replied, soberly.

"And why, pray?"

"Because his thoughts are of but one."

Her body became rigid, tense.

"And who is the fortunate lady, if I may ask?"

"She is dead!" he replied, nettled at her apparent lightsomeness.

She was immediately contrite, sensing the resentment in his tone. But a great curiosity filled her.

"Please forgive my flippancy!" she exclaimed. "Do tell me about it. I know there is a story attached to it."

Mollified by her contrition and apparent interest, he told her. Perhaps another purpose actuated him. Who knows?

Slowly, seriously, almost oblivious of his auditor, he told her the tale of Jean and Lizette . . . the

duel . . . the tragedy . . . Jean's vengeance. The Frenchman, his voice low and impassioned, now swelling, his eyes sparkling, now melting, might have been a troubadour of old Normandy reciting the age-old story of love and death. In the magic of the moonlight, he was a glamorous figure.

Entranced, engrossed in his absorbing tale, Virginia felt her emotions sway her—the hot tears fill her eyes. As she listened she felt a great envy of this girl who had died for Jean Lafitte—and a great yearning. . . .

Pierre ended his tale, making little mention of Jean's career in the Caribbean. His own eyes were wet, for Pierre was a sentimentalist, a lover of women as a sex; of the beautiful.

For a while there was silence.

Virginia was torn with conflicting emotions.

On one side was this new viewpoint of the Creole smuggler—"the fashion plate," as she mentally labeled him; a gallant gentleman, and a constant lover. All the world loves a lover, but Virginia felt more than an impersonally worldly affection for this lover in particular, if the truth be told.

On the other hand, there was that damning story of her chum, Margaret Claiborne, which pictured him as a cruel pirate, a murderer, and a lustful villain.

Suddenly an inspiration came.

"Pierre," she said, haltingly, "is it true that your brother killed a man—a quadroon—at Grande Terre?"

He answered without hesitation, matter-of-factly!

"Yes, it is. That was a very unfortunate occurrence, however. Jean was forced to do it. If he hadn't—"

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"Didn't he—wasn't it over a girl, a slave girl?" she demanded, strangely wrought up.

"Why, yes, that was the cause of it, I believe," he admitted, absently, unknowing of the havoc his words were creating. It *had* been over a slave girl, but each of these two very naturally were putting different constructions to this simply-worded fact.

Of such incidents are lives molded, empires destroyed, history made, mayhap.

She sobbed, then fiercely smothered it.

"What's the matter?" he asked, in surprise.

She sniffed.

"Nothing," calmly. "I merely coughed. I have a headache, Pierre. Won't you bring me a drink of water?"

He left her hurriedly, all solicitude.

When he returned with the drink for which she had asked, however, he stared around the arbor, in surprise, and swept the black ocean of shrubbery with his eyes.

She had disappeared.

Utterly. Inexplicably.

Pierre Dominique, musing bitterly on the peculiarities of the sex, turned misogynist.

The sheen of the river, near by, was like celestial silk. The moonlight still coquetted with the shadows, and the night-breeze, odorous with jasmine, was sodden with music. But to little avail; the girl was gone.

Pierre Dominique Lafitte, a gallant figure in cambric frills and claret-colored damask, raised his head to the opaque gloom of the nocturnal sky and said words—unrepeatable words.

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH:

*Wherein Mr. Livingston Receives
an Invitation and Mr. Grymes Pays
a Social Call on a Pirate*

I

“**M**ONSIEUR LIVINGSTON?”
“At your service, sir.”

The Creole bowed, his white teeth flashing in a deferential smile.

“I 'ave *l'honneur* to be ze bearer *d'une lettre*—of a letter—wheech h' I am to geeve to you een pairson, monsieur.” He bowed again.

Edward Livingston looked puzzled. The contraction of his brows became more accentuated.

“A letter, for me?” he murmured. “Who can be sending me a letter by messenger?”

The Creole rightly interpreted his perplexity.

“I come from ze Exchange een ze *Rue St. Louis*, sair, but ze lettaire, she come from Grande Terre!”

“Grand Terre!”

“*Oui*, monsieur. I am a fr'en' of Monsieur Lafitte, an' I was at ze Exchange when anozzer fr'en' of our he approach me an' geev me two lettaires. I am soo-prise a verry gred deal. Zen zis man sayce to me, he sayce: ‘Ze *bosse* want you to geeve zese lettaires to Monsieur Grymes an' Monsieur Livingston . . . *rapidement* . . . an'*moi*, you weel fin' me een ze Café de Chat Noir. H'l weel 'wait an ansair.’ An' zen zis fr'en' goes off. So h'I take zese lettaires, one to

Monsieur Grymes, and *l'autre est ici* . . . 'ere ees ze ozzer."

And the attorney's caller handed Livingston a large letter addressed to himself in the bold, graceful handwriting of Jean Lafitte, and sealed with a great splotch of purple wax.

With a word or two of thanks, Livingston motioned the Creole to a seat and rang for wine. Then he opened the letter and eagerly read the message.

As he read on, a look of surprise passed over his face, to be succeeded by disappointment, astonishment, vexation, and finally thoughtfulness.

When he finished his perusal, he read it over again carefully, and then stared thoughtfully into space.

At just this moment his negro butler entered the door.

"Mistuh Grymes, suh," the darkey announced, "am in de hall. He sez hits impawtant, suh."

"Bring him right in, Joseph. But wait." He reflected for a moment. "I'll see him in a moment. Take him to the drawing-room."

Joseph bowed again, and was gone, noiselessly.

"Pardon me for a moment, sir. I'll be right with you in a few minutes. I believe that Mr. Grymes wishes to consult me on a matter connected with the letters you so kindly brought. There may be an answer."

"Certainement, monsieur."

A moment later Livingston entered the drawing-room, there to find his colleague pacing up and down, manifestly excited. In his hand was an opened envelope sealed with a huge purple seal.

"Did you get a letter from Lafitte?" asked Grymes,

abruptly. "Ah, there it is in your hand. Well, what do you think of it?"

Livingston looked at him narrowly.

"What do *you* think of it?" he asked. "I presume our letters are practically the same."

Grymes nodded.

"He invites me to that island—Grande Terre—to pay him and his friends a visit and to come and get my fee!"

"Exactly. Mine is another invitation to the same effect."

"Well, Livingston, what do you think of it?" The repetition seemed to please him.

The other smiled wryly.

"Think of it? Personally, I think it is a rather unusual request. In effect, Lafitte invites us to collect our fee—ostensibly."

"What do you mean?" puzzled.

"Just this. Our piratical client invites us to come and get our money—collect in person. In other words, to put ourselves right into the hands of a horde of smugglers, pirates, slavers, and other riff-raff—where our lives won't be worth a minute's purchase!"

Grymes stared at him for a moment.

"Do you mean to imply that Lafitte will go back on his word? That he will let harm come to us, or perhaps cheat us out of our money?" he cried, in astonishment.

The other pursed his lips.

"I imply nothing," he said, "but only state this: If it had been the honest intention of our client to pay us, he would have somehow sent the money here, or had it transferred to us through one of the bankers

on Toulouse Street. In other words, I mistrust his offer."

The Virginian looked at him blankly, and then burst into a roar of laughter, as if bitten by the tarantula of mirth.

"May I inquire as to the cause of your levity?" asked Livingston, exasperated, and secretly a little ashamed of his suspicions.

"Oh, Livingston, what a curse it is to lack a sense of humor!" cried Grymes, cryptically. "Here you've just finished extolling the virtues of Jean Lafitte to a jury, and yet you're too cautious to trust him! And after solemnly informing those twelve respectable men of his courage, high sense of honor, ideals, square dealing, charitableness, and so forth, making a saint out of that jolly smuggler, and perjuring yourself like a gentleman, you have the consummate audacity to stand here and tell me that you distrust your client—or words to that effect. Really, my dear fellow, you are rather inconsistent, don't you think?" He looked at the discomfited attorney quizzically.

"Then I am to understand that you intend to—er—pay a social call on Mr. Lafitte—you will accept?" asked Livingston, impassively.

"Will I accept? Will I?" cried the Virginian, joyfully. "I should *say so!* I wouldn't refuse it for anything!"

Livingston seemed somewhat taken aback at this.

"You mean—"

"I mean that I am going—at once, too! Lafitte says in my letter that he has a boat here—the *Saucy Susan*, I believe—all ready to sail. When she does you can rest assured I'll be on board. I've already

given orders to pack a few clothes. I'm only sorry that I can't see Jinny, but she's visiting Margaret Claiborne at their country place, so I'll just leave her a note . . ."

"But you are really going?"

"Of course! It's the chance of a lifetime, man! I've always wanted to see Grande Terre, I've heard so much of it, heretofore my official position made it impossible for me to even entertain such a thought. But now . . . I should say I am going!" He chuckled and smacked his lips.

"And I mean to investigate that famous cellar of Lafitte's, too. Of course I wouldn't like to lose the fee, but I trust Lafitte, anyway. He's a real gentleman, if there ever was one!"

Livingston paced up and down, his brows drawn together in thought. At last he looked up.

"If you are set on going, Grymes," he said, "I won't try to dissuade you. But I shall decline Lafitte's offer with thanks. However, I'll make you a proposition. If you will collect my share of the fee—the twenty thousand dollars—I will give you ten per cent commission! How does that strike you?"

The Virginian briefly considered this.

"Fine! I'll do it, though not necessarily for the commission. But you'd better come along, Livingston; you'll enjoy the trip."

"No, thank you! I have made up my mind. Go alone, and earn your commission if you can."

The Virginian looked him in the eye and laughed.

"Thanks," he said, dryly. "I'll do my best!"

Two hours later the *Saucy Susan*, all sails set, was merrily flying before the breeze, down the Mississippi,

her dainty nose headed south. John Grymes, briskly walking the poop-deck, stared across the muddy waters, now and then chuckling, as if inwardly amused. He was.

It had been often said of the high-living Virginian that he feared nothing on two feet or four. Indeed, he rather prided himself on that reputation. Certainly he could take care of himself. In any event, he anticipated an interesting stay at Grande Terre. He was not to be disappointed.

II

The carriage, rolling majestically down the Rue de Burgundy, that quaint street of heavily grated archways, high lattices, and iron-railed balconies, came to a smooth halt before the red-brick-front, balconied mansion of the Livingstons, with its dark, covered carriageway and green batten shutters. A passer-by, at sight of its occupant, suddenly stopped and stared at her, unnoticed.

Alighting from the carriage, a woman ascended the steps of the imposing dwelling, was admitted, ushered into the high-ceilinged, paneled chamber, and was left there to face the master of the house.

Hardly waiting to go through with the usual polite banalities, Virginia Grymes plunged directly into conversation.

"Could you tell me, Mr. Livingston, where father has gone? I've just returned from the Claibornes', to find a note at home telling me that he has had to go out of town on business and would be gone about a week. That is quite unusual for father. He al-

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ways tells me where he goes—Rappahannock told me, however, that he was here just before leaving, so I thought perhaps that you might know. I'm rather worried . . . and I *must* see him!"

Livingston smiled paternally.

"There is no need to worry, my dear, for I do happen to know where he has gone. But I should prefer not to tell you . . . at least, I don't believe that he would like me to tell you, since he hasn't so informed you in his note. It is a business matter, you see." He smiled again quite paternally.

She looked puzzled, her expressive dark eyes clouding.

"But why all the secrecy, Mr. Livingston?"

"Well, I—"

"But I simply must see him. It is very important for me to do so."

"I'm very sorry, but it is impossible."

"Why?" sharply.

The attorney decided to tell her.

"Because you cannot reach him at present. He has gone to Barataria."

She clutched at her bosom, her hand rigid.

"To Barataria?" she murmured.

Livingston looked surprised, and vaguely annoyed at her emotion.

"Yes, to Grande Terre."

"But why—why?" she cried.

"What do you mean?" he asked, coldly.

"Why did he go there, of all places?"

"If you must know," he answered, his displeasure manifest in his voice, "he went to see Mr. Lafitte, on business."

"Mr. Lafitte!" thunder-struck. "But why did he go? You must tell me—I insist!"

Livingston gazed at her disapprovingly.

"I am afraid I cannot," he said, calmly. It could easily be seen, he thought, that the daughter of John Grymes was spoiled. Virginia, however, forgetting all convention, grasped his coat lapels.

"You must tell me why," she commanded, her eyes defiant, her chin haughty; "you must, you *must*!"

Livingston stared at her, thoroughly astonished and somewhat alarmed.

"My dear Miss Grymes, calm yourself! I am very much surprised at your behavior, I must admit. Indeed, I would like an explanation."

Virginia looked at him for a moment, gravely.

"Mr. Livingston . . . it is highly essential that I know. You must tell me!" She released his lapels.

"But—"

"I saw Pierre Lafitte last Tuesday. He mentioned nothing of any such trip."

"He did not know anything about it, Miss Grymes. But, since you are so insistent, I will tell you. Your father went to Grande Terre to collect our fees, at the invitation of Jean Lafitte."

She stared at him, puzzled.

"But why didn't Mr. Lafitte send it to you? Why didn't you go with father to Barataria?"

Livingston looked rather uncomfortable, although he fought against showing it. Why should he, Edward Livingston, experience embarrassment on being questioned by a mere slip of a girl? But then, why shouldn't he tell her the reason of his reluctance to accept the pirate's invitation? He fairly ached to

discuss it with some one . . . and she was John Grymes's daughter. Why not with her?

"I'll tell you, Miss Grymes. Personally, I mistrusted Mr. Lafitte's invitation to come to Barataria to get our money. As you say, why shouldn't he have sent it to us here, as is proper? Therefore, I refused, and—"

"Let father go!" finished Virginia. "Mr. Livingston, I am surprised at you! How dared you let him go, alone, to that nest of—pirates? I just know he'll never get back alive! And it will be your fault, sir, and Mr. Lafitte's, too! I warned father not to take that case—that no good would come of it. And I was right! What *has* come of it? First, father resigned his official position to accept it. That was bad enough. Then he was insulted in open court—accused—of—of—dishonor, and was forced to fight a duel in consequence . . . and almost killed Mr. Hemingway . . . crippled him for life!" She was almost in tears now, but her anger was growing upon her. Livingston stared at her, fascinated, unable to put in a word in his own or Grymes' defense, so petrified with surprise was he. As for his militant companion, she swept on.

"And now you've let him go to Grande Terre—to those pirates, and didn't stop him! Why? Because you wanted that money, Mr. Livingston, but valued your own skin too much to try to get it! So you let father go! How did you *dare* to, sir, how *did* you dare to, when you knew that he was going into danger?"

For a moment the eminent lawyer was speechless—with rage, and something else, something he couldn't

quite define. But she gave him no time for further thought—further argument. She walked to the door, cheeks blazing and eyes flashing, without another word . . . as if unable to trust herself to say more. Livingston followed her to the hall; indeed, almost jeopardized his dignity by hurrying. What might not this Amazonian creature do? Where might she not make another scene, doing infinite harm to both her father and himself? Suppose Claiborne should get hold of the story . . . at just this most inopportune time? Or suppose any one of those Creole gentlemen scandal-mongers should get it into their heads that he, Edward Livingston, scion of one of America's most elegant families, was afraid to risk his skin in the stronghold of the man who was his client, whom he had just extolled so highly before all the world! What gossip would ensue! At the clubs—on the *banquettes*! She must be stopped at all costs!

"Miss Grymes, where are you going—what do you purpose doing?" asked Livingston, nervously, as he reached her at the door, which she had already opened. At the curb her carriage was waiting, with the impassive Scipio on the box.

She turned and looked at him, her manner breathing contempt.

"Do, sir? Why, I'm going to father, of course!"

He was astounded at this intelligence. Was the girl demented?

"You're going to Barataria?" he cried, hoarsely. "Good God, girl, you don't know what you are saying! It—it's impossible!"

Her chin came up defiantly.

"Why is it impossible? I'm my own mistress, Mr. Livingston."

"But, Miss Grymes . . . it *is* impossible! Think of it . . . you, a young—lady . . . a gentlewoman, to go alone to that pirates' resort . . . to voluntarily place yourself in the power of those outlaws, low sailors! It is preposterous! Unthinkable!"

"I hardly think that Mr. Lafitte, if he *is* a ruffian, would let me come to harm, sir. He would not dare!"

The choleric Livingston almost choked with exasperation.

"But, Miss Grymes, you do not understand! It is impossible because you simply cannot. It would be the worst breach of convention one could make . . . Come, Miss Grymes, you must admit that it will arouse a great deal of unpleasant talk—scandal! It may be bad taste for me to mention this, but you force me to . . . Come, come—give up this foolish project! You have your name, your reputation, to think of . . . and that of your father, besides. I know you love him too well to cast a stain on his name!"

For a moment she regarded him intently, as if trying to fathom his very soul.

"That is just why I am going, Mr. Livingston," she said, proudly, "because I love him and wish to shield him from harm. In the event that he is in danger, as you, yourself, believe him to be—don't deny it, sir!—I may be the means of averting it. They would not dare harm me! As for scandal, let them talk! This is no time to consider petty conventions! My father is in danger and I am going to him . . . and besides, sir, who can be a better chaperon for me than my own father?"

"Yes, but people will think—will say—er—they will put different constructions—"

"Who need know, Mr. Livingston? I will go on our own little sloop, which will be manned by our own people . . . And I'm sure you will not advertise the fact of my departure."

"No, no, it is not to be thought of!"

"I am of the same opinion, Mr. Livingston. It is not to be *thought of* . . . it is to be done! And the sooner the better! Therefore, I wish you a very good day, Mr. Livingston!"

She swept him a curtsy and descended the steps, walking toward the carriage. Scipio gathered up the reins and the mettlesome blacks champed at their bits, eager to be off. Unnoticed, the same passer-by, a Spaniard, was still loitering near by, his insolent gaze fixed on Virginia.

Livingston followed her to the carriage step, not primarily for the purpose of helping her into the vehicle, as was the custom, but to further remonstrate. Virginia would not hear him, however. The coachman was about to start.

Livingston, goaded to desperation in the knowledge of her intentions, which, if discovered, would make that estimable personage the laughing-stock of New Orleans, threw all discretion to the winds. He had tried everything—cajolery, veiled threats, argument. But she had been obdurate. He was desperate.

"Miss Grymes," he cried, as the carriage was about to roll off, "in your father's name, in the name of decency, I *forbid* you to go to Grande Terre!"

For a moment she stared at him in unbelief, and then burst into silvery laughter. At his distinctly

audible words the loiterer started in surprise and moved a little nearer. Neither the girl nor the man noticed him, so absorbed were they.

"I' faith," she cried, "*you* should be the last to forbid anyone, Mr. Livingston!" Her scorn deepened. "Though one shouldn't be surprised in your forbidding a mere girl to go where a great strong man like yourself would not trust himself! But Virginia Grymes is the daughter of her father, sir! Good day, Mr. Livingston!"

The carriage rolled away over the cobblestones and turned the next corner, to disappear.

But Edward Livingston stood on the curbstone—dumb—infuriated.

For the first time in his life, Edward Livingston, leader of the Louisiana bar, a Livingston—of *the* Livingstons—had been insulted, shamed to his face, and by a mere slip of femininity.

He shook with the violence of his emotions.

"Impertinent baggage!"

But Manuel Encarnacion Espinosa paid him no further attention, for he was staring down the street after the departing carriage, a joyous gleam in his eyes, his faith in the holy saints now trebly strengthened by this stroke of luck.

A moment later, he, too, walked hurriedly away, and again the sun-splashed Rue de Burgundy was deserted.

BOOK TWO

Temptation

"... Why must you engage in the barter of human souls? ... Won't you give it up—for my sake?"

—VIRGINIA GRYMES

* *

"... I am not an American—neither by birth nor by inclination. ... On my decision hangs the destiny of this territory. ... Have I reason to love the American government? Why should I resist this temptation?"

—JEAN LAFITTE

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH:

*How Virginia Comes to
Bordeaux Manor
and One Manuel Espinosa
Takes What He Wants*

BARATARIA BAY!

Swarming with water-craft of every description and every nationality—brigs, schooners, caravels, sloops, pinnaces, tartanes, barges, and countless small boats—French, Spanish, English, American, and the indeterminate nationalities of the visiting rovers of the Caribbean; these, with the numerous vessels of the Baratarians, the waters of this smuggler stronghold fairly teemed with life, and presented a scene not to be duplicated in any other portion of the globe.

A trim little sloop, beating up from the north, had just emerged from the narrow pass into the bay, and rapidly made its way through the host of stationary and moving water-craft off the yellow shores of Grande Terre.

A little later the *Virginia*, for such was the name that was faintly distinguishable on either side of the weather-beaten bow, came to anchor, and almost immediately two negro sailors disembarked into a trailing dory and swiftly rowed ashore, where, upon landing, they vanished in the crowd that thronged the beach.

Virginia Grymes, hidden from view in her father's sloop's tiny cabin, with her maid, a fairish West Indian, watched the animated scene ashore with absorbed

interest, while awaiting the return of Scipio, the mate, and his master.

Seen from seaward, Grande Terre was a picturesque sight, with its long, low buildings and tall, graceful palmettos silhouetted against the southern horizon, the island rising in gentle sandy slopes from the marge of the busy bay, which, like an immense opal, flecked with innumerable prismatic tints—ruby, amethyst, sapphire, emerald, topaz, and chrysoprase—was heaving in languorous undulations.

Even as she watched, inwardly thankful that her arrival was apparently an inconspicuous and unnoticed one, she was unconscious of the fact that at that very moment the *Virginia* was undergoing an attentive scrutiny . . . and that the person so scrutinizing was smiling—an unpleasant smile.

Of a sudden, Virginia became aware of several men, who, emerging from the crowd, entered the *Virginia's* dory and began rowing toward her. From the fact that they wore red shirts, she knew they were Baratarians.

Another minute and the dory was alongside; still another, and its passengers had clambered aboard. Not daring to come on deck, anxious to know what had happened, wondering at the non-appearance of her father, Virginia began to heartily regret the foolish impulse that had brought her to Grande Terre. But she was not to long remain in doubt as to the identity, or intentions, of the newcomers.

A scant space after their boarding the *Virginia*, the door of the little cabin quickly opened and the red-shirted, bearded men entered it abruptly, hesitating a

moment on catching sight of the two women huddled against the opposite wall.

Smirking, the first Baratarian made an awkward bow.

"You are Ma'amselle Grymes?" he asked.

Virginia nodded, with a sudden wave of relief that they knew her identity. No doubt John Grymes had sent them for her.

"Where is my father?" she asked, tremulously.

For a moment he hesitated, and she looked from one to another uncertainly, flushing as she caught their frankly admiring, insolent looks.

"He could not come. . . . M'sieu Grymes had an accident. He—he broke his leg, ma'amselle, and *le bosse*, who is with him, sent us to bring you to him. He is anxious—"

Virginia snatched up her cloak, her half-born distrust vanishing at this momentous news.

"I will go to him," she said.

"*Mais certainement*," said the pirate, and he and his companions respectfully drew apart so that she could pass out of the cabin. Drawing her cloak closely about her, she hurried between them and began to ascend to the deck.

The next moment a huge hairy hand clamped itself over her mouth, she was seized, and in an instant was helpless. A stifled shriek told her that Marie, her maid, was being treated in the same manner. The icy hand of fear suddenly gave her heart an excruciating wrench.

Then, before she had time to struggle, or even to coherently think, she felt herself being firmly trussed and gagged, forcibly doubled so that her knees touched

her chin, and unceremoniously and hastily forced into a sack-like hamper, which was then closed. Helpless, blinded, dumb, and half stifled by the foul odor of the hamper, the terrified girl felt herself lifted from the floor, carried on deck, and lowered into the dory.

On the beach she heard whispered voices, other hands took up the hamper, and again she was being carried away.

Not long after she had been taken from the scene, one Manuel Encarnacion Espinosa strolled by, ostensibly dawdling, but in reality noticing much . . . and from the corner of his eye he watched a small boat that was rapidly crossing the little bay, headed for the mouth of one of the numerous streams that emptied into Barataria from the network of waterways that interlaced the forests of the mainland. And as he watched it disappear into the great green wall he smiled, for in it was a veiled woman.

On all sides were sweating slaves and stevedores, their black skins shining in the pitiless sun's glare; creaking winches and tarry ropes; bearded Baratarians with red-kerchiefed heads and bright red shirts; lean, fierce-faced pirates from the Caribbean; seamen of all nationalities; soft-voiced Creoles; quadroons, octo-rooms, and mulattoes; Mesquite Indians from Florida; Choctaws; Cubans, Spaniards, and Mexicans with spurs and silver-braided sombreros; revolutionists and exiles from Santo Domingo and other South American states; gentlemen adventurers and fortune-hunters from every unsavory corner of the continent; slavers, slave dealers, and traders; and last, but not least, the brilliantly clothed, swaggering dare-devils who belonged to Lafitte's personal following.

In the background were the long, low warehouses, the stockades and sheds of the slave pens, and the auction block in the midst of a busy little square. And dominating the whole scene, Bordeaux Manor—named, incidentally, in honor of the birthplace of the Lafittes—which, crowning the highest point on the island, in a grove of palmettos and cypresses, was a stately structure of stuccoed brick, of a distinctly Franco-Spanish type of architecture, with Moorish arches and many grilles and balconies.

As a strange contrast to the ugly, noisy village below were its grounds, its pounded shell walks, brick terraces, and its gardens replete with oleander, jasmine, and acacia thickets, orange trees, china trees, and bananas. A strange contrast to the busily nondescript scene farther down.

The whole was surrounded with a high spiked wall, with a huge gateway made for practical defense rather than beauty. This jarring note was emphasized by the presence of heavy ships' cannon, which were placed so as to command both the village and harbor.

With brooding eyes Espinosa gazed at the stronghold of Lafitte; a gaze of envy, hate, and the gloating pleasure of anticipation.

Even as he stood there he became aware of Lafitte and Grymes, trailed by the latter's two slaves, approaching the beach, both apparently excited.

Entering the dory, they rowed to and boarded the *Virginia*. In an even shorter period of time they had regained the shore, Grymes pale with anxiety, Lafitte furious and Scipio and his fellow chalky with fear.

From then on, things began to happen.

No one, it seemed, had noticed the coming of the

sloop, nor had any paid attention to its occupants. It remained for Señor Espinosa to furnish a clue, which he did at the proper—in his judgment—time.

"Señor 'Bosse'," he volunteered, "I saw a small boat which bore a veiled woman enter that stream just a few moments ago. But I never gave it a second thought, thinking her to be some planter's wife, or a prized slave. But now I am convinced it was the young señorita."

Thanking him fervently, Jean ordered a boat manned and, with Grymes, set out in chase of the supposed abductors.

Manuel Espinosa vanished into the seething crowd, but emerged again across the plaza, on the Manor road. And with him, when he did so, came a goodly number of his friends and followers. All were armed, and when, after an interval, a similar group followed, none gave them heed, for on Grande Terre every man went armed and every man kept his business to himself.

At the Manor gates, strangely enough, Jean's Myrmidons, the customary Manor guards, were absent, and henchmen of the Spaniard held their place. The former had been treacherously attacked and overpowered. Bordeaux Manor was now entirely in the Spaniard's possession . . . its treasures, its guns, and the power its existence implied.

Immediately following the entrance of the last of the conspirators, the great gates were barred and the walls manned. Manuel Espinosa was, for the time, the master of the Manor and Grande Terre.

When Espinosa entered, he immediately hastened to a certain inner room, whose door he locked behind

him. Virginia Grymes, its sole occupant, looked up in surprised affright.

She was liberated now from the tortures of the hamper, but was by no means happy. As she saw the Spaniard stand with his back to the door, for a moment, his insolent eyes avidly drinking in her beauty, memory came to her aid. He was the man who had loitered without Livingston's house in New Orleans—and now she remembered seeing his face in the crowd on the day of her adventure with the runaways. And as she stared at him, fascinated, she remembered that she had been uncomfortably aware of him on other occasions . . . of his insolent admiration, his lustful gaze.

As he stared at her, he realized that she recognized him, and he was pleased, in his animal way.

"So we meet again, señorita," he essayed, smirking and unsuccessfully attempting an imitation of a bow by Lafitte.

"Why have you done this?" she demanded, her eyes terror-filled, her shapely hand clutching at her bodice. "Where is my father—and Mr. Lafitte?" She was as yet unable to comprehend, in its ominous entirety, what had happened.

He grinned, displaying his horrible teeth. Yellow, evil teeth.

"They are gone . . . in the forests, trying to overtake your maid. When they heard of your disappearance, they were like headless chickens running around, until I, the good Manuel, told of how I had seen men take you away into the forest. And they instantly followed. Am I not a cunning one?" he smiled fatuously, anxious to exhibit his cunning to her.

"But why—why did you do this?" she cried.

His answer was candor itself, given with the ungarnished simplicity of the human animal that he was.

"Because I wanted you. And what Manuel Espinosa wants, he takes!"

She did not answer, but stared at him, her bosom heaving. Was this a terrible dream? Where was the prosaic world of commonplace happenings?

"I have wanted you since I first saw you," he went on, "and I have planned to get you ever since. At last my chance has come. Now you are mine!"

"My father will kill you." She choked, conscious, even then, of surprise at her own courage. "When Mr. Lafitte returns he will flay you alive. Can't you realize that?"

The Spaniard laughed, pleasurably. Then he cursed Lafitte, with a fluency, thoroughness, and variety of epithet that caused her to shudder—as much at the venomous hate in his tone as at the vileness of his obscenity.

"Lafitte's day is over!" he cried. "I—Manuel Espinosa—am now *boss* of Barataria—not Lafitte! Do you think me a fool? Me—Espinosa? By the nails of Christ—no! The French dog with his airs and arrogance has always been in my way—but I have bided my time—I, the cunning Manuel. I let him go ahead and build up Grande Terre, with his money and influence . . . for *me*! He thought Grambo was his enemy—but the quadroon was but a tool—my tool. I waited—waited—and now my time has come. The saints brought you into my hands—and through you put Lafitte out of the way.

"My men now hold the fort. My guns command

both the town and the bay. I can destroy the whole colony, if I wish. But I shall not, yet. I shall give them all a chance to join me—or be shot to hell! And I think they will join me, and even catch Lafitte for me—don't you?"

That she thought so was only too apparent by her horrified look, and the Spaniard smirked again.

"Lafitte is a cunning one—very cunning. But I, Espinosa, am smarter than he. You'll be proud of your husband, my pretty bird!" He advanced toward her slowly, his arms half outstretched, in his fatuous vanity interpreting her look of terror for admiration of himself.

"I'll die first!" she said, distinctly. His expression became menacing, when he had assimilated this.

"You should be glad that I'd marry you!" he exclaimed. "If you were not a great lady I wouldn't bother to marry you. But a great man should have a great lady for a wife—and the *bosse* of Barataria is a great man." At any other time Virginia would have laughed at the simplicity of his overweening egotism.

"You beast!" she cried, passionately. "I warn you, for the last time, to let me go! Mr. Lafitte and my father won't let you escape them, and if you've come near me, whether I've already killed myself or not, they'll tear you to pieces, limb from limb!"

Forgetting her terror in her truly royal rage, she made a beautiful picture, and the renegade was by no means unappreciative of it. Again he grinned and attempted to take her in his arms. She beat a furious tattoo on his breast, like a fluttering, helpless bird.

"Little fool," he whispered, "if the saints decide to

give the victory to the French dog, don't think you'll escape, for when I leave Grande Terre I'll take my wife with me, and we'll go back to the real life where there's blood and wine and gold—and women! But my little flower will outshine all of them, and I shall wear her—until I tire of her or throw her away to pick another. That is the way of the Brotherhood. But before I go—if I do—this upstart Frenchman will suffer, and you shall see the show. Dream of escape, señorita, all you please. *Y sueños sueños son*—dreams are only dreams—remember that!" He grinned. "And now a kiss, little flower!" and he grasped her arms.

Regardless of the consequences, she hit him in the face, painfully—and he laughed. Suddenly the reverberating roar of a cannon was heard; hesitating, he loosened her and then opened the door.

"I will be back, señorita," he promised, and laughed again as she quailed. A moment later she heard the bolt and his departing footsteps. With a pitiful gasp, she fainted.

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH:

In Which Virginia Hears

The Toast Of

"Vive Le Bosse"

I

"**B**UT why did she come—what on earth possessed her?" demanded Grymes, for the tenth time, eying Lafitte anxiously as the crowded longboat emerged from the winding stream to shoot across a lagoon-like bayou, to re-enter another stream that twisted and turned its way through the jungle-like forest.

"*Dieu le sait!* . . . there must have been some urgent reason that impelled her. But that is unimportant now. We must find her, and that before—before it is too late!"

"My God!" exclaimed the Virginian, as if suddenly remembering. "If anything happens to my little girl I'll—I'll— Oh, why did I ever come here—why?" His voice broke. In his mind's eye he saw a grave in an old Virginian churchyard, where slept the woman who had intrusted her baby to his care with her dying breath. He could still see her feverish eyes, hear her faint voice.

"'Twas my fault for asking you to come, m'sieu," said Jean, pressing his hand—understandingly. "I'd give my life not to have had this happen. But don't worry. We're bound to catch the scoundrels before long—they have but a few minutes' start. *Sacré nom!* If I only knew who's responsible!"

Already a half hour had passed since the rescue

party had left Barataria. Impelled by the powerful sweep of eager arms, the longboat made its way up the channel, passing through a perfect network of bayous and marshes, long stretches of cypress forests and low-water willows, thorny bushes hung with prickly smilax, and wide expanses of mud bristling with the *chevaux de frise* of the dwarf palmetto—unhealthy shallows swarming with millions of coarse aquatic plants.

Now and then glimpses could be caught of the horrible reptiles and snakes beneath; slimy, nightmarish creatures—crawling alligators; miniature forests of reeds, peopled with armies of bellowing frogs, purple ironweed, wild roses, pink spiderwort; an occasional dead cypress standing in lonesome isolation in the center of a marsh, on whose gaunt arms roosted rows of vultures.

Through forest and marsh, lagoon and stream—then a sudden unexpected bend of the stream, and the crowded boat glided out upon the surface of a glass-like bayou whose shores were lined with live-oaks and low-water lilies. The westering sun, gently dropping behind the farthest trees in a blaze of pink and gold, lightly tinted the silvery waters . . . willows and acacias were passing from the dull green of distant foliage to the brilliancy of chrysoberyl.

Almost simultaneously the voyageurs shouted, for across the bayou a small boat, carrying two men and a woman, was about to enter a tributary stream.

At sight of their pursuers the fugitive oarsmen redoubled their efforts, although it was certain they could not escape.

Plucking a pistol from his belt, Jean sent a ball over

their heads, and then another. With surprising alacrity the abductors halted, backed water a space, and deliberately ran their boat aground.

Thinking that they sought to escape into the jungle with their prisoner, Lafitte called on them to stop, and again fired. Taking the hint, they remained motionless, awaiting the others' approach. In another minute the Baratarians were alongside, and the incensed men had roughly laid hands on the unresisting fugitives.

Paying them scant attention, Lafitte, followed by Grymes, approached the swaying girl, and eagerly tore off her veil. For a moment he was as if petrified, realizing the extent of the hoax in a flash. Leaving Grymes to release and question the cruelly gagged and bound slave girl, he sprang back to the prisoners, with such unrestrained fury in his face that Espinosa's surly henchmen cowered.

"Where is Miss Grymes?" he demanded.

The burlier of the two shook his head. But Jean, in his rage, grasped his throat, choking him.

"Tell me what you know!" he panted "or you shall die a thousand deaths! *Sacré nom!*—you dare parley with me?" as the other hesitated. "'Kenzie—a fire—quick! I'll make them speak!" Even Grymes did not protest this apparently inhuman order. But the second prisoner, realizing that the *bosse* was in earnest, confessed.

"We do not know where she is now, *mon capitaine*," he muttered, "but she was taken to Manuel Espinosa!"

Lafitte stared at him aghast, remembering who had given him the clue for the chase.

"Espinosa! You are mad! Why, he—" He

paused. "No, I believe you, dog! Yes, yes, I see it all now! So the Spaniard has struck—he thought to avenge Grambo—the fool! Or is there more to this—is there more?" he mused.

Grymes, again white with anxiety, broke in.

"But where is he now? Where has he taken Virginia?"

Jean whirled on the prisoners.

"Yes—where is he? Don't lie to me, or your life will pay for it! Where has he gone? To Cuba? To Mexico?"

"I don't know—I swear it, *mon capitaine!*" desperately.

As he spoke, they heard the muffled boom of a ship's cannon, far to the southeast—whence they had come.

"It's Grande Terre!" exclaimed Grymes.

For a moment the *bosse* listened intently. But no more shots followed. Again the forests were still; the west was a sea of liquid fire.

"That was Bordeaux Manor!" he exclaimed. "Something has happened. Dominique You is signaling us to return. Perhaps they have caught the Spaniard. Into the boats!" he ordered, quickly, his thought now all on Grande Terre.

"And these *canaille*," spoke up a red-shirt, with callous insouciance, "shall we shoot them, *mon capitaine?*"

"Bring them along," ordered their leader, shortly. "We'll deal with them later."

Both boats recrossed the bayou, heading for Barataria. And this time they sped along even more quickly, if that were possible, than when they came.

When nearly back, again they heard the roar of a

cannon, and again Lafitte recognized it as one at the Manor. Ten minutes later they met another boat, hastening to meet them. In it, to his surprise, Jean recognized the grizzled Dominique You, one of his lieutenants, whose pride it was that he had once fought with John Paul Jones, and who worshiped his present master, the "Duke of Little Manchac and Barataria," even more than he had his late leader.

In a few sentences he apprised Lafitte of all that had taken place. Manuel Espinosa and his followers, most of them members of Grambo's former disgruntled coterie, had formed a conspiracy and secretly taken possession of Bordeaux Manor by a surprise attack.

The first notification the colony received of the change of affairs was a salute of the Manor gun. The shot was followed by Espinosa's sending out one of his prisoners with a message to the Baratarians announcing that he had assumed the leadership of the colony, and demanding that they consider Lafitte as deposed and recognize him as its head. If any refused to join him, they must leave the bay at once. If any attempts to attack the Manor were made, he would bombard the village and harbor. If adherents of Lafitte remained, the promised bombardment would also take place.

Although furious at the Spaniard's treachery and resenting his high-handedness, the colonists were in a trap and at a loss what to do. For the time being the renegade held the whip hand. The Manor battery had the village at its mercy and was more powerful than any guns mounted on the privateers in the harbor. Bordeaux Manor, as was well known, could

stand a long siege, being well provisioned and armed. And what was more to the point—in the Baratarian's estimation—the vaults of Bordeaux Manor held all the accumulated treasure of the colony. Leave Barataria? Not they!

Just on the marge of the forest a council was held, and Jean was joined by many of his lieutenants. All were infuriated, but as yet no attack had been made on the stronghold, pending the arrival of Lafitte. The village of Grande Terre was seething with excitement. At any other time Jean would have withdrawn the Baratarians to the mainland—even if under fire—and there have decided ways and means with which to recapture the Manor at their leisure. He realized that the Spaniard's real aim was not to govern Grande Terre, but to escape to the Caribbean with the treasure of the Baratarians.

The fact that Virginia was in the Manor, made this theory more probable, and it was this fact, too, that decided him to rescue her at once . . . to save her before it was too late—if it was not already so.

It was now dusk.

Returning to the island, Jean left Dominique You with certain orders, and, taking some twoscore of his trusted personal followers, with Grymes, he led them away from the village to the upper, wilder end of Grande Terre.

At a certain thicket he stopped, and his little band gathered around him. Tearing aside a mesh of vines with a cutlass, Jean at length revealed to their wondering gaze a little mound, half covered with a huge stone slab. When this was raised, it revealed a black hole.

"A secret passage!" exclaimed Grymes.

Lafitte nodded. Only he, himself, and a very few trusted lieutenants knew of its existence.

Followed by the men in single file, Lafitte entered, with the Virginian close behind him. For what seemed an interminable time they made their way through the mephitic darkness, guided by the walls, until the upward slope of the ground told them that they were approaching the Manor. Another interval, and the line came to a halt, while Lafitte fumbled with something at the end of the passage. A moment later a door swung inward, and the foremost men found themselves looking into the great banquet hall of the Manor, now empty and shadowed. On passing through, one found the entrance of the passage to be behind a movable slab that formed the back of the huge fireplace.

Passing through the great chamber to the entrance hall, they overpowered a few rebels found there before they knew what had happened. Then, surging through the stately entrance in a wild charge into the courtyard, they fell on the surprised garrison with a fury that matched their enthusiasm.

During the fierce *mêlée* that followed, the gates were opened and a human flood led by the man who had fought with Paul Jones triumphantly swept in. The courtyard for a brief period was an inferno of struggling men, slashing, shooting, yelling—a mob gone mad—with no quarter given or expected.

But Lafitte and his guest were not among them. Together they were conducting a furious search for Virginia. Nor had they far to seek. For not a moment, it seemed, after the beginning of the short bat-

tle in the courtyard they heard a woman's scream. At a wild run they scaled the grand staircase—a moment's indecision until raised voices gave them their direction—and then threw themselves against a locked door!

Grymes cursed aloud, and, not noticing where Jean was running, flung himself against the door. From within he heard a man laugh and a woman sob.

Jean, realizing the futility of an attack on the stout door, ran to the next floor to the room above, dropped from the window to the balcony below, and burst into the room *via* the French window.

As he did so he saw Virginia, hair and clothes disheveled, struggling in Espinosa's arms. At his entrance, the Spaniard spun around in surprise, cursing as he recognized Lafitte. Evidently he was ignorant of the rescuers' arrival.

Just then, as Lafitte sprang forward and they grappled, Grymes, given strength by excitement, burst in the door. He saw Lafitte slip and fall—saw Manuel miraculously produce a knife—saw it flash downward—and fired from the hip.

And then he saw Espinosa, still gripping the knife, suddenly sink to his knees and fall across the half-recumbent body of Lafitte, who, his temple having hit a stool in falling, was stunned.

And finally, John Grymes saw his daughter run across the room, not to himself, but to Lafitte, and, lifting his head, thinking the knife had done its work, burst into a frenzy of weeping.

Jean Lafitte, returning momentarily to consciousness to find her tears on his face, decided that he must be dreaming, and closed his eyes again.

When next he opened them she was gone.

II

Several hours after the recapture of the Manor and the death of Espinosa, when peace had once more descended upon Grande Terre, Lafitte met his two guests at dinner.

Grymes and his daughter met their host in a small, luxuriously appointed chamber, in which was a table laden with an imposing array of silver and crystal, with a huge, many-branched candelabrum in the midst of a mass of crimson oleander, serving as a centerpiece.

During the meal little mention was made of the terrible experience through which the girl had gone, all tacitly avoiding it. Virginia told of her conversation with Livingston before leaving New Orleans, and her father scolded her roundly for coming to Grande Terre. The three were just beginning to emerge from the tension of the past day. It seemed like a nightmare one had gone through, and so it was.

During the wonderful meal that followed, Grymes told his daughter how royally Lafitte had entertained him since his arrival . . . told in detail of feasts and sports and thrilling experiences—as he was to tell it to his cronies many another time in the future. And as the meal progressed, the happenings of the day faded into the unreal past.

"Would you like to join our gentlemen privateers at dinner this evening, Miss Grymes?" asked Lafitte, near its end.

She looked puzzled.

"What do you mean, Mr. Lafitte? I thought—"

"Pardon me—" He signaled to the huge slave

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who had piloted them here a short half hour before, and spoke a few words to him in crisp French, which she could not quite catch. With a bow, the negro left the room, to return in less than a minute. Then, walking over to the farthest wall, at the end of the room, which was almost wholly covered by a great tapestry, half hidden by hangings and potted palms, he pulled a silken cord.

In the meantime a much smaller table, laden with the dessert, had been placed directly in front of this tapestry.

As the negro pulled the silken rope the tapestry slowly rose into the air, to hang suspended and to disclose a little wrought-iron railed balcony. Offering his arm to Virginia, Lafitte led her over to the smaller table, where she was seated behind a large palm which protected her from the eyes of anyone beyond the balcony, but afforded her an excellent view.

She gave a gasp of astonishment, while Lafitte and Grymes looked at each other and smiled. Evidently the Virginian had witnessed the spectacle before.

Beneath her was a strange scene. The little balcony upon which they sat projected from the wall, apparently, of a great room, many times the size of the dining hall, and rectangular in shape. At one end was a great fireplace, behind which, incidentally, was the secret passage, in which a log fire was merrily crackling. On the walls were hung rich tapestries, wine-stained hangings, mounted animal heads, weapons of all descriptions, and a variety of other ornaments. In place of candelabra, large blazing torches in wrought-iron braziers were placed in the walls at intervals, and three great chandeliers of wrought-

iron, also with blazing torches, flooded the chamber with light. The flagged pavement which was the floor was littered with animal skins and rich rugs.

But the center of interest was the long table in the middle of the floor, running the length of the room, around which were sitting perhaps two hundred men. These, although Virginia did not yet know it, consisted of the most prominent of the Baratarians, the wealthier of the traders and visitors to Grande Terre, and the closest followers, personal friends, and retainers of the *bosse* of Barataria.

All of this was briefly explained to Virginia by her father, who also informed her that the banquet scene below was a nightly affair, which was usually presided over by Jean Lafitte himself. At the moment, a great carved armchair, which stood vacant at the head of the long table, bore mute testimony to the fact that the master was not there, corroborating his statement.

Grymes, however, did not mention that the feasting and carousal going on below them was of a much more restrained nature than was usual. He also did not describe the nightly orgies of a Lucullian nature that took place; of the revelers who drank and sang all through the night; of the scenes which he had witnessed and which he intended to describe at length to his less fortunate friends who had never taken part in a pirate revel. The hard-drinking, high-living Virginian felt very much at home among these hard-drinking, high-living buccaneers; and, if the truth may be told, wished very much that he could be among them below, now.

At the moment, a tall, swashbuckling gentleman rover was standing, and singing a melancholy French

love song to the accompaniment of a group of Baratarian musicians who sat before the fireplace. He sat down amid much cheers and applause. These Creole lawbreakers evidently had much of the sentimentalist in their make-up.

This was followed by a rollicking drinking song, which was gradually taken up by the whole assemblage, accompanied by the music, the thumping of feet, "beating juba" with the hands in the Southern fashion, and the clinking of the drinking mugs on the tabletop. The effect was astounding. Virginia drank it in, fascinated by the picturesque scene before her—the colorful costumes, the roaring melody, the continuous, ever-increasing noise and hilarity. It seemed unreal, bizarre, as if it were but a figment of the imagination.

At this point, however, Lafitte stood up, with the intention of leading his lady guest from the scene. He well knew that it would not be long before it would develop into a bacchanalian orgy, and wished to spare Virginia the sight. Grymes, intuitively understanding his intention, nodded approval. He privately hoped that his daughter would soon retire to her own rooms, so that he could join the revelers.

As Lafitte stood up, however, he was seen by a few of the feasters below, and in a very few moments, it seemed, the whole assemblage was aware of his presence. Indeed, it was almost impossible not to be seen, although he was partially screened by the palms.

In any event, as if by magic, the song suddenly died down and for a brief moment there was silence. Unconsciously, Virginia gripped the arm of her chair; the sudden silence made the air seem to have become elec-

tric with an undefinable suspense—to give one the sensation that the tableau was not yet complete. Nor was it.

On a sudden, a gaudily dressed, black-bearded Baratarian leaped up on to the long table, a goblet of wine in his hand. Holding the beaker high in the air, with a raised sword in the other hand, he cried, enthusiastically:

"Vive le bosse!"

The toast and cry of "Long live the *bosse!*" was taken up with a will, and the vaulted ceiling rang with the deafening cheers, accompanied by the brandishing of weapons and the spilling of wine. For a brief period a pandemonium of wild cheering continued to fill the great chamber with a volume of sound. All eyes, apparently, were directed toward the little balcony.

It was all very dramatic, this tribute to their chief.

Thrilled to the core, her every nerve vibrating with a strange exhilaration engendered by the excitement of the demonstration below, the girl looked at her host.

Jean Lafitte stood perfectly still for a moment, like a man of stone. Unconsciously, he was making a heroic pose, and for the moment was forgetful even of his guests.

He was proud of his men, and was prouder to think that they were proud of him. He was their leader, and they would have no other. It was a gratifying thought—this.

This was his throne-room, these his subjects. The "Duke of Little Manchac and Barataria" was receiving the homage of his subjects.

Slowly—unconsciously almost—as a man in a

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dream, the man whom a thousand lawbreakers called *bosse* inclined his head—a simple gesture, true, but a regal one.

The cheering doubled—trebled—became deafening.
“*Vive le bosse!*”

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH:

*Wherein Is Encountered
a Man—a Maid—And a Moon*

"ROMANCE?" queried Lafitte. "Romance, Miss Grymes, enters into the life of every mortal—and, like love—and hate—it is primitive." He fell strangely silent, staring into the darkness of the trees.

The two of them were alone, for Grymes had joined the feasters in the banquet hall, leaving his host and daughter together on the terrace near the dining room, leaning on the parapet overlooking the gardens. In the distance, through the palmetto fronds and foliage of the magnolias, could be seen the lights of great bonfires in the village and the glimmering lanterns of the ships in the harbor. Snatches of song and altercation, laughter and jesting, were borne to them on the night breeze, telling them that the celebration of the day's victory was not yet over.

Above them, high in the purple-black firmament, hung the harvest moon, whose soft golden glow, falling on the shadowed gardens, breathing of mystery and romance . . . the gleaming, phosphorescent waters of the Bay . . . and the flagged terraces and tiled roofs of Bordeaux Manor . . . lent an air of glamorous enchantment to the scene.

Forgetting to reply, the girl cupped her chin in her hands and stared into the mysteriously alluring distance, fascinated by the scented, balmy atmosphere—the odor of jasmine, orange blossoms, roses—and the magic of the friendly but coquettish moon.

It was a typical Southern night, and Virginia, a

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Southerner in every fiber, fairly gloried in it, basking in its magnetism—for it had magnetism. But Lafitte, himself a lover of the beautiful—himself a Southerner of that romantic Gallic land where chivalry and sentiment went hand in hand, although under the same celestial hypnosis—was more absorbed in another spectacle, the most exquisite that Nature vouchsafes to mere man—that of a beautiful woman, of a land noted for its feminine pulchritude.

Feasting his eyes on this slip of Virginian loveliness he felt his artistic soul stirred to its tumultuous depths; filled with an exquisite yearning, suffering every torturing ecstasy of the lover who feels that he worships in vain.

A man—a maid—and a moon!

"What a beautiful moon!" exclaimed Virginia, impulsively.

Lafitte started, aroused from his self-imposed lethargy, and turned his stare on that celestial gentleman. He regarded it seriously, probingly, his shapely head slightly atilt.

"On just such a night," he half whispered, as if to himself, "Jessica stole from Shylock's house to meet her lover . . . Leander swam the Hellespont . . . and Romeo serenaded Juliet."

As if to give credence to his words, a man's rich baritone was heard from the beach, singing a French love song—a pæan of nocturnal sins—to the thrumming of a wailing guitar. The eyes of the two listeners instinctively turned toward a high balcony above their heads, to the right, much as if they expected to witness just such another amorous tableau.

They looked at each other guiltily and laughed.

"You are a sentimentalist, Mr. Lafitte," she accused, "and, apparently, a great lover of novels . . . and romance."

"All Frenchmen are lovers of romance," he returned, smiling.

"And are adepts in the art of love-making?"

He flushed. "No. If you will allow me to say so, here is one who is not."

"I have—er—heard differently," with an assumed indifference.

"Indeed?"

How exasperating he was. She realized she had met her match in the game of repartee, and they had hardly as yet crossed swords! She grew reckless.

"What of your Mauritian fisher-girl?"

He stiffened. "What do you mean?" abruptly.

"I mean—Lizette Fondac," faintly. Inexplicably, she turned her face from him.

"What do you know of—of Ma'amselle Fondac?" he asked, in surprise.

"I know the whole story—of how she saved your life." She paused uncomfortably, then bravely plunged. "Speaking of love—and romance—there is an example, sir. You said a moment ago that love is primitive, or words to that effect. I say that real love is more than primitive—it is magnificent—especially magnificent when it gives all without question. Real love is renunciation. That is how, I imagine, your Lizette felt toward love. She gave her life without question. Isn't that the greatest sacrifice a lover can make?"

"No!" fiercely. "Love's greatest sacrifice is when one has loved and lost . . . when one has given up

one's love—living—to his rival—to his best friend—to his brother!"

The bitterness of his outburst startled her, and its wording the more. Doubtless, she thought, he was referring to an affair in which he had been worsted by a friend—or Pierre! Perhaps concerning Gabrielle, or C  leste, or Ang  lique—or Margaret Claiborne! Like a lightning shock came back to her the forgotten words of her chum, on that memorable day!

"I thought so, once, too," with reference to the eyes of Lafitte.

Could it be that Margaret and Lafitte—and why not? Suddenly her heart felt sick. Suppose she had been wrong all this time . . . Margaret might have told her that story purely from meanness of soul—or jealously!

Pierre Lafitte had unembarrassedly told her the story of Grambo, with but the slightest mention of a slave girl.

"Jealousy!"

She hugged the word to her heart . . . could it be? From that moment a dislike of Margaret was to remain with her, and a new emotion was born—the emotion that had gripped her by the throat when Espinosa had attacked Lafitte, that very day.

Virginia would have given much to read the mind of the Baratarian at that moment. If she had been able, many things would have been cleared, for Lafitte, in his last bitter remark, had been referring to herself—thinking that his own brother loved Virginia Grymes, and he, Jean, could not enter the race, because of no less than—his past attitude. For Pierre, he knew, was convinced that he, Jean, could never love

again . . . that his heart was buried with Lizette. And, fool that he was, he had strengthened Pierre's conviction these past ten years, by his acting, his foolish pose.

He could not, in honor, now drop what was really a mask and enter the lists . . . he must remain a poseur.

Yet how he loved her—how he fought to restrain his love! For one mad moment he had thought of taking her—this American rose. Was she not in his power? Was not his word law, here at Grande Terre? She had willfully put herself into his hands . . . why should he not take this gift of the gods? After all, he was considered but a pirate, and a pirate took what he wanted—regardless of consequences.

But the next moment found him despising himself for the thought, for he remembered Espinosa. The Spaniard, too, had taken what he wanted.

Looking at her, bewitchingly lovely in the moonlight, he trembled with the very fury of his emotions—longing to pick her up in his arms, and fly, to the southern seas—to some uncharted tropical island—anywhere away from the world. Happiness was sure to be found—

But he knew it was impossible—this. It was only a dream, tantalizing, but unreal. There was one obstacle which he could never surmount—his conscience—his sense of honor. Never could he play the traitor's rôle to his brother—and his associates—his comrades.

He stared at the lights of the distant village and heard the snatches of rollicking laughter—the oaths—the songs. No, never could he desert his beloved rascals, for without his brain, his cunning, they would be

but as easy prey to that inveterate enemy, William Claiborne. And if love—bitter-sweet poison!—could force him to desert them, he could never thus use his brother.

In this strain rushed Lafitte's thoughts, while Virginia mused, neither noticing the silent absorption of the other, yet both acutely conscious of each other's proximity.

"How did you come to hear of Lizette, Miss Grymes?" he asked, quietly, regaining his poise.

"Your brother—Pierre Dominique—told me."

"What—how much did he tell you?" asked Jean, wondering if Pierre had been indiscreet enough to mention the death of Brouillard—his career in the Caribbean.

"We were speaking about you—I was asking about you—" unguardedly. He thrilled to learn that she had been interested enough in him to question Pierre.

"He told me about the duel—and the accident—and that's all—" lamely. Suddenly she turned to him. "I hope you'll pardon my curiosity, Mr. Lafitte," she said, contritely. "It was rude of me and far ruder to mention it to you." Her eyes clouded.

"Pardon her," indeed! He trembled with delight.

"But certainly! Forget the matter. I will tell you of it, though I have never spoken of it to anyone else."

Virginia thrilled.

"I was but a boy when it took place. And I was deeply in love with Lizette. *Parbleu*—yes! She was dark, slim, charming—a sprite—a mermaid. . . ." He paused for a moment, his introspective gaze bridging the colorful years. "But you know the story . . . it is not one that one likes to talk about. In any event,

after her death, and since, I have never let myself fall in love—but once, perhaps, and that is irrelevant—”

She instantly thought of Margaret Claiborne—he was thinking of one Virginia Grymes. But neither was a mind-reader, unfortunately.

“But Lizette . . . I almost persuaded myself that my love was the real thing. Indeed, I sincerely believed so . . . until I met—until Pierre persuaded me differently.” Damning evidence! “Pierre has always been my adviser—my chum. There is a husband for any woman,” he added, loyally.

At his words she unaccountably flushed, and Jean felt convinced . . . his theory that she and his brother loved each other was a true one.

The tables had been turned on Virginia. Embarrassed, she turned the conversation.

“By the way,” she interjected, suddenly, “pardon my interruption, but there is something I want to talk to you about.”

At once he was all attention.

“It is ‘black ivory.’ ”

Jean stared at her.

“I believe that is what you call them—the slaves, I mean.”

“Yes, we call them ‘black ivory,’ ” answered Lafitte, somewhat puzzled.

“I’ll tell you,” she began, assuming a confidence she did not feel. “You see, I’ve spent the past few years in Philadelphia, and during that time I’ve met many interesting people, among whom were some members of the Society of Friends.”

“The Quakers,” supplemented the Frenchman.

“Yes. Well, their sect doesn’t seem to be at all in

favor of slavery, Mr. Lafitte, and to a certain extent I agree with them. Personally, I really think that slavery is a cruel institution—but it can't be otherwise, I suppose, and will always exist. Father says that the negro is too uncivilized and altogether mentally incapable of assuming the responsibility of his own welfare—if he were allowed to do so."

"That is true," said Lafitte, "and not only that, but the blacks will never be freed, for the simple reason that we can't do without them . . . they are our only source of labor."

"Isn't that a selfish doctrine?" demanded Virginia.

"Perhaps, but nevertheless a true one. What the Quakers say is all nonsense. Slavery is better for all concerned."

"But in the North the slave isn't very important."

"Because he couldn't live in the Northern climate. While here, in the South, the negro, accustomed to heat, is the only laborer to use. I have heard some of these men speak, from the Colonies of Massachusetts and New York," he went on, "but they are wrong—absolutely. And they forget, most of them, that it was their own ancestors who fostered slavery in America. Finding that they could not profitably use the blacks in the cold North, they sold them to the Southern planters. Now Congress has forbidden the further importation of slaves. The Northern Colonies can no longer make money by selling them to us, and so are enraged—"

"But, Mr. Lafitte, I am not talking about the rights or wrongs of the practice of slavery itself. You may be right there. But I do think they should be treated better—not like cattle or goods." She looked up,

facing him, with hesitation. His dark eyes were meditative. "And not only smuggled, but stolen!" She paused then took the plunge. "Mr. Lafitte, why do you engage in this trade—in the barter of human souls?"

He did not answer, but looked into the distance. Suddenly he realized that he had been expecting this question—dreading it—and knew that he was unable to answer it.

"You know what they are saying of you?" she asked.

"My enemies, yes. That I am a pirate—a—"

"The world does say that! And, true or not, is it worth it?" Impulsively she laid her hand on his as it rested on the parapet. "No real gentleman would stoop to such an occupation. Ah, I have hurt you? No? I didn't mean to, but nevertheless it is the truth. Some day you may regret it, Mr. Lafitte. It does not benefit one to antagonize convention, sir, or the world. Come, why do you do it? There must be a reason; of course, it's partly money, but still another. What is it?"

He stared at her for a moment before speaking.

"You are right," he said, slowly, "it is more than mere money. I have enough of that. But it is the love of the game—the excitement of the thing—that keeps me at it. Excitement is the breath of my life; it stimulates me—keeps me from thinking too much—gives me my only pleasure."

She grew thoughtful, her ivory-like brow wrinkling.

"But why not use your brain and money in a legitimate service, Mr. Lafitte? Lead an honest life, if I may use the term, and don't give anyone an opportunity to say that 'Jean Lafitte is a pirate, who, with his money and influence, corrupts men of honor and

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is a menace to the government!' That is practically what a great many people are saying, to-day.

"Why do you do this, Mr. Lafitte? I know, or rather, have been told, that the Creoles dislike our government—and that there are those who wish to defy it, who really hold it in contempt! But it won't be long, sir—it won't be long before your Creoles will be only too proud to call themselves Americans! Some day our United States will be the greatest nation on earth . . . I know it!" In her voice was the fiery spirit bequeathed to her by her mother and grandmother, the women who had sent their husbands and sons to fight for their nation's independence with smiling lips and breaking hearts.

As she stood there, her face earnestly aglow with a prophetic light, her figure etherealized by the moon's magic, she looked almost unearthly. Lafitte was as one struck dumb, his eyes alone shining with adoration, his heart-beats set a-rioting by the contact of their hands, of which she seemed unconscious.

"Mr. Lafitte, what do you say? It is not too late. Give up this life—"

The light in his eyes died out and his lips closed firmly.

"You may be right, Miss Grymes, but I cannot desert my friends."

But she ignored this.

"Sue for pardon of the Governor, sir. You have friends. It can be done!"

"Ask Claiborne for a favor? Never! You don't know the Lafittes, ma'amselle. No, what you ask is impossible—utterly!" His voice was harsh; she could not know of the mental strain under which he

was laboring—how he fairly longed to win her favor, to do this thing that would make them friends. If he did, if he but would . . . what could not happen?

But Pierre, what of Pierre?

"No, Miss Grymes," he went on, gravely, "I am sorry to be forced to say so . . . and please believe that I appreciate your interest. But what you ask is impossible. I have made my bed and must lie on it. Some day, perhaps, some day . . ." He stopped and stared moodily at the Bay. What was the use?

For a brief moment Virginia was silent. But her mind ran riot with tumultuous thoughts. A strange mental metamorphosis toward Lafitte had taken place—from one extreme to another. Whereas, up to this eventful day, and this last hour of enlightenment, she had held a fierce antagonism toward this gentleman smuggler—born of her belief that he had shot the quadroon for the possession of a negress—now that she had unwittingly discovered the falsity of the tale, or rather, had convinced herself of its falsity, she felt overwhelmed with a sense of shame and remorse, perhaps not unmixed with self-pity.

Shame, that she should have ever harbored or expressed a feeling of repulsion or hatred against Lafitte; remorse, that she should have ever spoken or felt bitterly against him, who, whatever he might be, had saved her life, and again saved her from a fate worse than death; and lastly, she felt self-pity as she thought of what might have been—of how she might have had even this man among men at her feet. Not because of a spirit of coquetry nor as a salve for her vanity—she was too sweet to be vain—but for some undefinable reason, she knew she wanted him there, with

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a fierce desire . . . why, she couldn't even explain to herself.

But, easily to be seen, the Baratarian was not in that position, and she could not but admit that she was piqued by his aloofness. Masculine aloofness toward herself was a hitherto unimaginable experience. This pique it was, then, that had forced her so to dislike him! A woman will forgive anything in a man—anything, 'tis said—but a pointed lack of interest in herself. What woman is insensible to the homage paid her charms? And by the same token, what woman is insensible to the *lack* of that homage?

With all the passionate fire of her Southern temperamental heritage, Virginia was fiercely jealous of Margaret Claiborne—and Lizette. Equally unknown to herself, she loved the man styled "the duke of Little Manchac" . . . the handsome autocrat of his island domain.

On one thing she was clearly resolved. She would do all she could to atone for her unjust suspicions, her lack of faith. She would reclaim him, if possible, from his piratical life—and perhaps yet break that wall of aloofness.

The end justified the means . . . why worry at this pregnant moment about the niceties of convention? All man-made customs and conventions and inhibitions must give way to the demands of nature. . . . Was not nature and romance but as one? And had not Lafitte himself but a short time before quoted an immutable cosmic law?

"Romance," he had said, "enters into the life of every mortal—and, like love—and hate—it is primitive."

A MAN—A MAID—AND A MOON

Yes, romance was primitive . . . as was love and hate. The cave-woman of the Stone Age and this cultured young girl of this modern era, beneath the thin veneer of civilization, were at heart but as one.

Thus Eve. Thus Cleopatra. Thus Laura. Thus Helen. Thus Juliet. And thus the Eves, Cleopatras, Lauras, Helens, and Juliets of all ages, all time.

"Jean—Mr. Lafitte—" The "Jean" was a daring touch.

He turned abruptly, thrilling at their proximity. How he yearned for her!—with a mental ache that tortured his every nerve. He struggled to avert his eyes, to resist the temptation of crushing her in his arms.

"*Sacré Dieu!*" he muttered, his senses in a swirl, "was ever man so tempted before?" *Was* ever man so seared by this fiendish demon of Love? He gripped the parapet until his knuckles shone white—fighting within himself for control—struggling to regain his much-vaunted poise. Two internal Lafittes were now at grips—the cool-headed, impassive cynic and the emotional, love-torn sentimentalist. Which would gain the mastery?

But the girl could not know of this mental chaotic maelstrom. If she had known, would she carry out her plan—execute her test? Perhaps not, and again, being a woman, perhaps . . .

"Captain Lafitte," she breathed, face upturned to his, dark eyes on his in mute appeal, "won't you do this—can't you, for my sake?" It was the acme of feminine appeal, this, used, perhaps, since the days of Eve.

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For a moment Lafitte was stone-like—his black eyes in vivid contrast to his pale face.

"For *your* sake?" he murmured, more with a fierce joy than in surprise. "*Nom de Dieu!* For your sake?" He gripped her by the arms and gazed searchingly into her eyes, an operation not conducive to lucid introspection at any time, let alone when they shone with the very essence of the moon-glamour.

For a brief space she was filled with consternation at the reaction her words had evoked, and longed—fairly longed—for the power to recall them. But something greater than her will, some vague, indefinable power, urged her on. She nodded dumbly, unable to resist the magnetism of his eyes, momentarily fascinated.

Sweeping her into his arms, he passionately kissed her, once—twice—on the lips, and, wonder of wonders!—she returned it! But it was that strange, delirious power within her that did so. The normal Virginia Grymes was in a spell—a spell of sudden, overwhelming happiness, 'tis true, but still in a state of unreality—the sweet wonderland of love's flaming exaltation.

Attempting to awaken from that delicious momentary surrender, to regain the world of prosaic reality, she attempted to break away, but hopelessly, and capitulated—gloriously.

She knew, at that moment, that she loved and always would love this imperious pirate—this Jean Lafitte!

"For your sake," he repeated, with a fierce under-note, "I'd cheerfully walk through the Inferno and laugh! I, who have seen your form in every flower,

your eyes in every star—whose voice echoed in every breeze—whose angelic presence has blessed my dreams! For your sake—”

“You love me?” she murmured, still under the hypnosis of that magic glamour. “*You* love me?” unbelievably, mechanically.

“Do I love you?” he cried, exultantly. “Great God! Why did Leander swim the Hellespont? Because he loved her! Why did I—love you? *Je t’adore!* I adore you—worship you!” He half sobbed with a fierce joy, the joy bells in his soul deafening him with their wondrous pæan.

“The wonder of it!” he whispered, “the glorious wonder! I love you, and you love—but do you, do you? Tell me, light of my life, *ma cœur*, if you could care for a poor devil of a Frenchman? Tell me . . . tell me!” he entreated, hoarsely, holding her a little away, staring with devouring eyes into her pale face—experiencing a rhapsody of eager joy.

Of a sudden voices were heard; across the gardens, ’tis true, but none the less distinct. Startled, the two lovers looked up and half fell apart.

“But where can I find *le bosse?*” they heard, faintly.

“He cannot be disturbed. He is with his guests,” came the reply.

“But I must see him!” exclaimed the first, with an oath. “I come post-haste from N’Awleens with letters from Monsieur Pierre Lafitte. There is trouble in the wind. Martain says that Claiborne has cooked up another scheme. *Dame*, yes!”

“Trouble again?” said the other. “It is to laugh! Why, only to-day—” His voice became indistinguishable as the two evidently moved away.

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When Jean next spoke, the fire had died from his voice. Jean the lover was gone . . . the old Lafitte was back in his place, jerked back to himself by the interruption at this critical moment.

"Virginia—ma'amselle—" he said, dully, "forgive me, pray forgive me, if you can. I was mad—mad! This thing can never be. God, no! What a fool I was! I thought to bury honor—manhood. 'The evil that men do lives after them' . . . *c'est vrai* . . . too true! I cannot turn traitor to my friends—my men. *Le bon Dieu* forgive me for a coward . . . a heartless wretch—but I cannot! You will forgive my ungentlemanly conduct, Miss Grymes?" he pleaded.

"Ungentlemanly conduct!" And he had just avowed eternal love! What a mockery—a travesty—is life!

She smothered a sob in the merciful shadows, and Lafitte looked at her eagerly.

"Can't you—won't you understand?" he asked, a world of suffering in his voice. But she was oblivious to it, apparently, for she laughed—or was it a sob?

"I understand perfectly, sir," she said, with hauteur, in a hard, bitter voice, "and despise the advantage you took of a defenseless woman. And I do not forgive you, for there is nothing to forgive!" She laughed scornfully, but it broke and became a sob. "But I suppose all men are alike! Only the—the Spaniard was frank—"

"Ma'amselle!" His hands contracted . . . the thrust had gone painfully deep. "Do you mean to say that you do not—that you did not—"

She raised her chin haughtily, though her wet, sensitive eyes denied any imputation of acting on her part.

"Precisely. I was merely playing with you, Mr. Lafitte, flirting, if you will." Ah, if his eyes could have but pierced the gloom and detected the heart-breaking lie. Poor Jean . . . and poor Virginia.

His head fell to his breast and his half-outstretched hands to his side. For a moment her features softened, but only for a moment. For she remembered those kisses—her surrender.

She hardened.

"Moreover, Mr. Lafitte," she exclaimed in a choked voice, "I—hate you."

And she was gone.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH:

*How De Moulin Comes to Flirt at
the Quadroon Ball
but Remains to Fight*

I

THE LADY IN THE MOON, at ease in her airy chariot, gazed downward with smiling eyes. Far beneath her lay the city of New Orleans, picturesque enough by day, but even more so by night, with the one lone spire of St. Louis praying silently to the stars.

Here could be seen the old gardens of the Faubourg Ste. Marie, with its parterres of jonquils and hyacinths smiling in the silvery glow, and its groups of lagustrums and laurestines vaguely delineated in the black shadows of the acacia thickets. Here could be caught dazzling glimpses of the walks of gleaming pounded shell, winding through groves of magnolias with buds as white as the moon itself, and flowering orange trees. And from each fairy-haunted garden is wafted aloft on the balmy night air the myriad scents and odors of nature's efflorescent masterpieces, to delight the senses of the immortals on high.

And her celestial ladyship peers down on the sparkling waters of the Gulf, and continually kisses its face, and with magnificent impartiality distributes her favors, as well, on the broad bosom of the restless, sullen, ever-changing Mississippi—that Titan of many moods—and the youngest of the watery trinity, Lake Pontchartrain; and does not even neglect the more

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modest, lagoon-like bayous, unexpectedly scattered, here and there, on the marge of the virginal forests. And the personage in the Moon smiles tenderly.

On Ste. Philippe Street, in a broad, white-brick theater, honeycombed with gambling dens, ablaze with light, and made conspicuous by the two huge wrought-iron lanterns hanging pendant on either side of the entrance, a theater ball is in progress.

The Philippe Street Theater, like that of Condè Street, is, as all the world knows, one of those celebrated edifices of amusement wherein are held the brilliant quadroon balls which are the talk of half the South.

What, you have not heard of the quadroon, *mon ami*? *Nom d'un nom!* What deplorable ignorance! The quadroon caste, *mon pauvre ami*, are descended from the merry chevaliers of the colonial military Frenchmen, grown coarsened by intimate contact with Spanish-American frontier life, and, on the other hand, from the most comely specimens of the less negroidal types of the newly brought-over slaves, bought at the auction-block of New Orleans. And now, after perhaps seventy or eighty years, their half-caste female descendants, one-fourth negro though they are, are among the most beautiful of all the beauties of this lotus land of the South; and, truth to tell, oftentimes are hardly recognizable for the class they are.

The balls? Ah, the balls that were gotten up for them! What beauty! What gayety! What elegance! What a brilliant attendance! The quadroon balls alone were sufficient to give New Orleans a unique place in history.

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How often would the aristocrats, the Creole gentry, desert their friends at the fashionable Theatre d'Orleans to spend the rest of the evening at the equally exclusive, quadroon theater balls! Here were to be found the flower of the masculine world of Little Paris—planters, officials, gentlemen of leisure, merchants, bankers—scions of the proudest names in Louisiana, the "*jeunesse dorée*"—the gilded youth. Were the quadroons their equals? Of course not! But what would you? When one seeks amusement . . .

To have danced, quarreled, and made passionate love at the quadroon theater ball was as necessary a part of a gentleman's education as to have a course in debauchery in Orleans Street, in gambling for high stakes in Royal Street, or in having fought at least one duel at Slaughterhouse Point. And it was a pleasurable duty participated in by every Creole gentleman from his later adolescence to his second childhood.

The theater balls were a habit. As was the masquerade—the Mardi Gras.

II

Pierre Dominique and François de Moulin, in spirits as lightsome as their costumes were gay, marched arm-in-arm down the moonlight-drenched street, headed for the cluster of lights that told of the presence of the theater ball.

"And he sayce to me," De Moulin was saying, "'you do nod realize eet, *mon ami*, bud zis war es going to be brought home to us—an' dam' soon, at zat!' An' when I laugh he sayce, 'ze next step de British are going to take will be an attemp' to invade Louisiana!'"

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"I'm not so sure, Grymes isn't right," said Lafitte, thoughtfully, for once. "Jean tells me that he's sure of it. Du Boulanger got through the blockade last week—he was coming from France—and he told Jean that it isn't a rumor, but a fact; that none of us have the slightest conception of the blow that Great Britain contemplates dealing us. He pointed out that the war between England and France is at an end, that Napoleon is safe in exile, and, therefore, that she is now able to send her whole military and naval power against us—and you know what that means!"

De Moulin nodded.

"You may be right. Accord'n to Grymes, zere ees at zis moment an armada on ze sea, zat consists of at least fifty warsheeps an' a zousand guns; manned by ze veterans of Trafalgar an ze Nile. But of course it's all rumor."

"Where there's smoke, there's bound to be a fire," said Pierre, dryly. "I'll admit that I don't believe the story that the Duke of Wellington, himself, is to be in command, but I do believe that something is afoot. Anyway, Du Boulanger thought it important enough to go to Claiborne and warn him. But the pompous ass laughed at him."

"If he wanted zat man to believe anyzing, he should 'ave told him exactly ze opposite!" muttered François. "Ze more I zink of some people, ze less I zink of zem!" with sage plagiarism.

For a moment or two they walked on in silence. A block ahead of them a dark figure vanished around the corner of a stone wall on the Rue Polymnia; a *guichinango*, perhaps—a garrotter, or night cutthroat, with

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which the city abounded. When they reached the corner, however, he had disappeared.

"Speaking of Grymes," said François, "have you heard zat he ess in financial difficulties?"

"I shouldn't be surprised, when I remember how he gambled away his fee two years ago," referring to the Virginian's visit to Grande Terre. Jean Lafitte had sent him home in a yawl boat loaded to the gun-wales with chests containing the forty thousand dollars that was his and Livingston's fees, for the legal defense of Pierre Lafitte, in gold and silver coins. And all New Orleans knew the story of how Grymes had gambled away his share of the treasure before he had even returned to the city, having stopped to visit several planter friends *en route*. It had been the talk of the town, mulled over and magnified a hundred times in the clubs and on the *banquettes*.

"Two years," murmured De Moulin. "What a lot 'as happened in zose two years! Heah it's 1814 an' ze war isn't over yet. I wonder what will happen in ze next two years?"

"According to Du Boulanger, quite a lot will happen!" retorted Pierre. "He says that the fleet's bringing along a complete set of civil officials to govern us, after they've annexed us to His Majesty's dominions. The officers are said to be bringing their wives, so they must no doubt expect to make a rather longish stay. And Du Boulanger says that British speculators expect to bring home fourteen millions of dollars in loot—loot from our homes!"

"Enough about ze war!" cried François, gaily. "We have bud one life to live, Pierre—let's get what

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we can out of eet. If ze war comes, we'll fight. In ze meantime we'll flirt! *Allons!*"

And arm in arm they approached the bright entrance of the theater ballroom and began to ascend the stairs, exchanging pleasantries with a descending pair of convivial friends.

In the great long room where the ball was in progress, they found an animated and noisy crowd. In the flickering light of the colored lamps a merrymaking mob of both sexes, members of the *demi-monde* in the main, but with a fair sprinkling of the masculine upper class, were dancing to the music of violins and guitars, whose piercing melody rose even above the lively buzz of the chattering groups.

As the pair entered, the dance came to an end and the floor began to clear, until the center was almost empty. But as the music struck up again, with the preliminary rattle of castanets, instead of beginning to dance, the crowd formed a circle.

And as they eagerly craned their necks there was a slight commotion and a babel of voices at the upper end of the room, and a girl was half pushed into the circle—a quadroon, true, but beautiful as only beauties are that are found among her caste—languorous, provocative eyes, sheenful hair of storm-cloud hue, and a slim, lithesome, perfectly proportioned figure.

"Eet ees ze adorable Dolores," whispered François. "She ees going to dance—bud wait an' see!"

Even as he spoke the "adorable Dolores," with a swish of skirts and a tap of little red heels, had begun to dance. The queen of the *demi-monde*, for as such was she known, although of mixed descent, looked to be Spanish to her dainty finger tips, and danced with

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the daring abandon inherited from some light-footed Andalusian ancestress. To the rattle of castanets, and the delirious throb of the music, she whirled and pirouetted, the admired cynosure of all eyes.

At the finish of her dance the crowd closed around her with acclamation and applause, and the music struck up again.

Shouldering his way through the throng, using his elbow to good advantage, De Moulin with some difficulty reached her side, to find her besieged by a dozen gallants, begging her for the next dance.

"Ef ze gentlemen will pardon her"—his voice carried over the shoulders of the group—"ma'amselle, I believe, 'as honored me wiz zis dance!" And he smiled ingenuously into her startled eyes as he pushed his way to her side.

A chorus of voices protested, but he took her arm decisively, looking deep into her eyes, a proceeding rather popular with his friends of the other sex.

"Am I not right?" he asked, and winked almost imperceptibly. For a moment she hesitated, colored, then smiled. Without another word he began to lead her to the floor.

Pierre Lafitte, watching the little scene from the rear, chuckled.

"In the meantime, we'll flirt!" he quoted, and laughed.

But his laugh died away, for he saw a third figure suddenly confront the Creole and his fair companion and lay his hand on the girl's arm. With surprise he recognized the gangling figure of the Yankee, Cyrus Nash, friend of Hemingway, the district attorney, who had seconded the latter in his duel with John Grymes.

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"This dance is mine, Mister dee Moolan!" cried the Yankee, angrily. "What do you mean by—"

De Moulin looked at him in surprise.

"Why, it's Meestaire Nash!" he murmured, with feigned cordiality. "And 'ow ees youah nose, sair?" innocently.

Nash reddened, acutely conscious of the fact that the member mentioned was now the object of a hundred curious stares. For a moment he merely spluttered incoherently.

"You—you—I'll break every bone in your body!"

"M'sieu wishes to fight?" cried François, with alacrity. "He 'ave wait a long time—two years, *n'est-ce pas?* I 'ave been greatly disappoint!"

"Who said anything about—" began the other, but paused. "So you want to fight, do you? Any time'll suit me! But it will be with bare hands, Frenchy!" His fists doubled with anger as he stepped forward threateningly. Dolores sprang between them theatrically, secretly overjoyed to have two men of the *haut monde* publicly quarreling over her; ignorant of the real cause of their enmity.

"Stop—stop—m'sieurs! You muz not fight! I gave dis dance to—"

"—Me!" broke in François, urbanely. "If m'sieu wants to fight, for why he don't join ze army?"

A shout of laughter went up, in which even Dolores joined, at which Nash paled with anger.

"Will you fight?" he demanded.

"No!" responded François, promptly. Dolores looked at him in dismay. Was she to be cheated out of this?

"You're scared!" exclaimed Nash, triumphantly.

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De Moulin laughed, and stared pointedly at the other's nose.

"Perhaps I am. But I only fight as gentlemen do, not like lackeys," contemptuously.

"All right!" snapped Nash, desperately. "I'll meet you with pistols!" Dolores brightened and looked at François eagerly.

"But I only fight *with* gentlemen," added the latter, suavely, at which Nash sprang forward, cursing furiously. "Bud since you 'ave insult' zese ladies here wit' your language," the Creole continued, "I weel fight you right now and will horsewhip you afterward!" The dancer simpered, and the crowd yelled encouragement. The music had long since abruptly stopped.

"You muz nod fight 'count of me," Dolores put in faintly, hoping that they would pay her no attention. To her delight, and the envy of certain of her dearest friends, her wish was gratified, but beyond even her wildest dreams, for other gallants in the room, anxious to share the limelight, pressed forward with offers to fight the "Yan-kee," on the flimsy grounds of his insult to the "ladies." Evidently his profanity of a few minutes before was to cost him dear.

As the tumult heightened, De Moulin, who was now sorry that he had given way to the temptation of baiting the man he disliked, wondered how the matter could be peaceably terminated; not because he was afraid to fight, but because of what he knew the crowd would do to the rash New Englander, in their eagerness to win admiration from their women-folk. For a moment he hesitated, and his eyes, meeting those of Lafitte, flashed a message.

But at this moment some adventurous spirit fired a

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shot, and a lamp fell to the floor, shattered. Women screamed and men cursed, forgetting their chivalric intentions; there was a flashing of knives. Close upon the heels of the first shot came a second, and a third, all fired harmlessly overhead, but adding materially to the confusion. The Latin is quick to take advantage of an opportunity to fight—especially a heaven-sent moment like this when one could safely and conveniently wipe out old scores with a dexterous blade or an errant bullet, and still add one's bit to the pleasure of the evening—for a ballroom fracas was no less than a pleasure, here in the *demi-monde*.

Both Lafitte and De Moulin well knew these things, and simultaneously decided to make themselves conspicuous by their absence, as some others were already doing. They did not relish the prospect of having their names connected with any such affair.

Cyrus Nash stood, an impotent figure in his bewilderment, a well-justified apprehension taking its place as he uncertainly regarded the rapidly darkening room, whose confusion was increasing tenfold. François had unaccountably disappeared, he could hear the "adorable" Dolores shrieking, and felt himself hemmed in, powerless to extricate himself from the *mêlée*.

"Follow me!" Of a sudden he heard François's voice in his ear and felt a hand on his arm. The next moment he was being hurried along by two men toward the door, the trio's combined weight forcing a quick exit through the milling throng. It was now completely dark, and the gun-fire, yells, and screams had increased in volume. The suddenness of what had taken place seemed dream-like, nightmarish, unreal.

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A moment later the three reached the door, were stopped for a space by an inrush of newcomers anxious not to miss the excitement, and with some difficulty reached the bottom of the stairs and the outer air, which, once gained, they hurried down the street, to pause a block away, panting from their exertions, the gaiety of their raiment somewhat spoiled.

"Meestaire Nash," said De Moulin, abruptly, "I apologize for what I said; you were right to be angry!" As he spoke they heard the sounds of battle from the theater ballroom increase, the ranks of the disputants evidently having been augmented from the gambling dens.

"Forget it," said the Yankee, "and thank you for getting me out of there. I take back what I said, sir! You *are* a gentleman!" And he held out his hand, which François shook warmly. Then, for a moment, they listened, and watched several women emerge hurriedly from the building in the next block.

"That Dolores," said Cyrus Nash, reflectively, "sure did make a fool out of me. You know, Mister dee Moolan, she really had promised me that dance!"

"I know it!" admitted François, chuckling.

"Then why—" began Nash.

But Pierre Lafitte interrupted. "Simply," he explained, "because François came to flirt and had not counted on a fight. *Mais, sacré nom!* What's a pretty wench more or less between friends?"

And arm in arm the trio marched off down the moonlight-spattered street.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH:

*In Which Jean Lafitte
Is Sorely Tempted,
and, Incidentally,
Sees a Vision*

I

“**D**IX MILLES DIABLES!” exclaimed Dominique You, bitterly, as he spat ferociously on the sand. “Dey weel ruin us yet. Here de planters weel pay a thousand dollaires a haid, and our pens are empty. If we could only get one shipload more we could mek a fortune!”

Jean Lafitte, walking by his side toward the beach, made no reply, seemingly buried in thought, while the old man who had fought with Paul Jones rambled on in the same strain. “Ten thousand devils,” indeed! Slaves were scarce in these days of blockades and war, and the planters were willing to pay any price for them.

By now the two Baratarians had reached the landing on the shore, where ship’s cargoes were being rapidly borne to and fro. A loaded vessel had but recently arrived, and the slaves, under the unpleasantly insinuating lashes of the overseers, were busily unloading the small boats. Evidently her cargo had consisted in the main of wines, Spanish and French, for it was being brought ashore in all varieties of containers—barrels, casks, tierces, pipes, hampers, octaves, and baskets.

Small wonder that the cellars of Bordeaux Manor

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bore a striking resemblance to the paradise of a Bacchanalian! Bacchus himself would have felt very much at home there, as had one John Grymes, on his memorable visit some two years before.

Jean languidly inspected the labels of several casks. Of late, it seemed, everything he did was done languidly. Wartime though it was, life seemed to hold no interest for the *bosse* of Barataria.

Dominique You disappeared into the near-by throng.

The day was extremely warm; not a breeze stirred, it seemed. It was early September, and no hint of coolness was offered by the placid sea, which was glittering with every imaginable tint, from palest aquamarine to the brightest emerald—from the pure blue light of the turquoise to the dark deep blue of the sapphire.

Of a sudden, almost unbelievably so, came the detonation of a ship's cannon.

There, around the easternmost end of a thickly wooded point, appeared the bowsprit, and gradually the hulk, of a frigate, which, it could be seen, was anchoring directly off the entrance of the narrow pass giving ingress to the inner bay. From her masthead flew the naval banner of—Great Britain.

And then, as Lafitte watched, a gig was lowered, manned, and passengered with three scarlet-coated figures in the sternsheets. It then entered the pass and made for shore.

By this time a number of armed Baratarians had assembled awaiting its coming, while others hurriedly made for their own ships at anchor in the bay, to prepare to repel any threatened attack, if necessary. Jean

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Lafitte, a commanding figure, with Dominique You, alone, by his side, awaited their arrival at the marge of the water.

The gig was soon landed, and the three scarleted officers disembarked and stood for a moment, looking about them. At a word from Lafitte, Dominique approached them and engaged them in a conversation, at the end of which he pointed toward Jean. The three Britishers then came forward, one of them, a ruddy, bewhiskered man wearing the uniform of a captain in the royal navy.

For a moment, the Baratarian and the Englishman eyed each other.

"Captain Lafitte, I believe?" ventured the latter, politely. Lafitte bowed, and his bow was even more correct than that of the punctilious visitor, given in return.

"I am Captain Lockyer, sir, of His Majesty's frigate *Sophia*. I have important dispatches for you, from Colonel Nichols, at Pensacola."

Lafitte showed his surprise, but attempted to cover it.

"Indeed? Won't you gentlemen accompany me to my quarters, where we can talk comfortably?" On the captain's quick acquiescence he turned and accompanied them through the silent, sullen, red-shirted crowd. Lafitte well knew that his men resented the presence of the Britishers, but he was nothing if not hospitable. And he was also very curious. What message could this Britisher have for him, a pirate?

Within the Manor, Captain Lockyer presented Lafitte with the dispatches he had mentioned, which were inclosed in a packet addressed to "Jean Lafitte,

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Esquire, Commandant at Barataria," and resplendently sealed.

On opening it, Jean found it to contain a number of printed forms, and a letter addressed to himself. As he read the first few lines of the letter he could not suppress a slight start, but remained impassive until he had finished.

"I suppose you know the contents of this letter, Captain Lockyer?" he asked, quietly.

The Britisher nodded gravely.

"I do, and I would strongly advise you to accept."

Jean rose from the table slowly.

"If you gentlemen will pardon me, I would like to retire for a moment. Colonel Nichols's offer greatly surprises me, and I would like to think it over."

"By all means," nodded the captain. "It is hardly to be expected that you . . ." his voice trailed off vaguely, for Jean had bowed, and was already leaving.

A moment later he was closeted with Dominique You.

"What do dese *canaille* want?" demanded the latter.

"Enough—" said Jean, his brow clouding.

Dominique looked at him keenly from under beetling brows.

"I can guess."

"What?" demanded Jean, startled.

"Dey want your help."

"You are right, old friend. Here are the papers. Most of them are merely proclamations made by Nichols, commander of the British forces in the Gulf, to the Louisianians, promising and threatening all sorts of things—"

"I know," impatiently. "I 'ave seen dem."

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"And the other is a letter, asking my aid."

The old Creole cursed softly.

"Wait. They don't want it for nothing. *Parbleu*—no! They offer me thirty thousand dollars cash."

Dominique You looked pained.

"Thirty thousan' dollaires? To de *bosse* of Barataria? *C'est pour rire!*" It was to laugh, indeed. Jean Lafitte, money lord of the Mississippi . . . thirty thousand dollars! A bagatelle!

Lafitte, however, looked serious.

"That is not all, Dominique. They offer me a captain's commission in the royal navy—quite an honor, *n'est-ce-pas?* And they offer us all amnesty—pardon for our past deeds."

"Dose dam' *Anglais* offeh us Baratarians a'nesty?" demanded the other, unbelievably. "*Sacré Dieu!* Dey offah us—" For a moment words failed him. "But foah what, *bosse?*"

"For our aid. Colonel Nichols wants us, in return, to enlist in the British navy, and to help them especially in their contemplated attack on New Orleans."

"You weel not accept, *bosse?* *Non?*" asked the Creole, anxiously.

"And why not?" returned Jean, coolly. But there was a curious gleam in his eyes. Dominique stared at him, aghast.

"It is a strong temptation," went on Lafitte, reflectively, "very strong. And I will admit that I am sorely tempted."

His companion regarded him with puzzlement. Something he could not divine was in his young chief's voice. Was he posing? For what reason?

"I am not an American," continued Lafitte, slowly,

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as if arguing with himself— "neither by birth nor by inclination. . . ."

"You are a Frenchman," said Dominique, uncertainly, "but—"

"As it is," soliloquizing, "we must face the truth. We Baratarians ever face the prospect of the hangman's noose, for we are naught but pirates, *mon ami*. . . ." His lieutenant nodded unwillingly. "And besides, Colonel Nichols promises to destroy Grande Terre and hang us all as pirates, if I refuse. So, you see, I have the men to think of."

"Dat is nod the *bosse* of Barataria speakin'!" cried Dominique. "Jean Lafitte is nod a coward . . . *pardieu, non!*"

"Thank you . . . I hope not. But the men—"

"De men go where you lead," declared the Creole. For a moment Jean was buried in thought.

"With my help," he murmured, "these British dogs could take New Orleans . . . which means Louisiana! I—Lafitte, can lead them through the swamps and bayous to the very gates of the city before anyone could possibly know of our coming. . . ."

"*C'est vrai*. . . ."

"On my decision hangs the destiny of this territory . . . on me, a pirate, with a price on my head. On me, whom Claiborne hunts like a dog! Have I reason to love the American government? Why should I not accept?" he demanded, bitterly.

Dominique did not answer. He was confused, realizing that Lafitte spoke the truth. After all, what did America mean to them? And what an exquisite revenge this would be on the vengeful Governor!

In his mind's eye, already, the man who had fought

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with Paul Jones saw the triumphant entry of the red-shirted Baratarians with their red-coated allies into New Orleans. After all, he thought, it was the best policy to ally themselves with the stronger side—and undoubtedly the might of England was the more fearsome. Perhaps the British were destined to take back their own—for was not America really theirs?

And both he and his master were wealthy—ready to retire. Was not the prospect of an honorable position—in security—a pleasant one?

“Why should I resist this temptation?” demanded Lafitte again. “I have everything to gain and nothing to lose. . . .”

Curiously enough, he thought of Virginia Grymes. . . . If things had been different . . . and, then, he could have— But had he not been thinking of nothing but her during these lonely two years? He was forced to admit it to himself—he still loved her; yet, knowing that she was not for him, that was all the more reason, perhaps, why he should assist her country’s enemies.

Suddenly, as if a man in a dream, he saw her again as she had been that eventful night in the moonlight—when she had cried in that prophetic moment: “Some day our United States will be the greatest country on earth. . . . I *know* it!” . . . God! how beautiful she had looked, and how convincing were her fervored words!

And in that mystic moment Lafitte *knew* . . . knew that he had never had the intention of proving traitor to his adopted country, his friends, his—he stopped; daring to go no further, even in thought. Come what may, he would give his life, if necessary,

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for his country. He knew it was his now; had been all along—and he would persist in working for its welfare even if that country itself would demand his life for his past deeds.

Unconsciously he shuddered at the thought of the narrow escape he had had. By what a small margin had he saved his honor—his ideals! And it had taken that momentary vision of Virginia to light his way.

On this moment he had hinged his whole future—and he had now irrevocably made his decision. His head told him that he would do wrong by refusing the British offer—that, logically, it was the best thing to do, for he had all to gain and nothing to lose. His was not the rôle of a Benedict Arnold, for he was not even an American! But his heart—that capricious, headstrong, arbiter of human destinies—assured him that he did right. That although he lost everything, including life, he would retain his honor. . . . And the heart triumphed over the head, which was rather unusual for Jean Lafitte. But, then, the heart is commonly supposed to be the abode of Love.

And so it came to pass that Jean Lafitte, at this turning-point of his life, took unto himself the counsels of his heart, and thus threw into the great cauldron of the future the destinies of a nation—and his happiness.

For the simple reason that Jean Lafitte *was* Jean Lafitte.

II

"Well, Mister Lafitte," demanded Captain Lockyer, affably, "what is your decision?" He had turned

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halfway round to the door as Lafitte entered, followed by Dominique You.

For a moment Jean did not answer, but his eyes sparkled. His companion's eyes were suspiciously moist. The British officers did not notice this, however.

"I am very sorry, Captain, but I cannot yet give you my decision."

Captain Lockyer looked askance.

"You see," went on Jean, slowly, "first, I must consult with my associates, many of whom are not at Grande Terre at present. Then, again, there are several truculent Baratarians who must be er—convinced—or else . . ."

The Britisher looked knowing. He winked openly as he chuckled.

"I understand," he said, insinuatingly. "It is to be expected, of course."

At the moment both Jean and Dominique You were mentally cursing him in unison. But their features were impassive.

"You see," went on Lafitte, "there are many of our men who er—er—have an embarrassing aversion toward your countrymen. Indeed, I regret to say that it is rather marked, in some cases!"

Dominique You coughed unobtrusively, but his face retained its unaccustomed blandness.

"I know," replied the doughty commander of the *Sophia*. "About how much time would you want for your—er—persuasion?" He grinned sneeringly.

"About a fortnight," responded Jean, casually.

"Very well, then. I'll be back for your answer in exactly fifteen days. How does that suit you?"

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"It is excellent," answered the Baratarian, coldly.

Captain Lockyer rose to his feet. His subordinates followed suit.

"I'm sure you'll like your new life much better," he went on, conversationally, "and it will be a real pleasure to have you with us when we thrash those American yokels."

"As you so well did in 'seventy-six!" remarked Jean, dryly.

Captain Lockyer flushed. For a moment it seemed as if he were about to spring at the Baratarian, so obviously angry was he.

In the nick of time, however, he caught the gleam in the eyes of the other that spelled "Danger," and interpreted it rightly. Captain Lockyer was no coward, but he suddenly realized that he was not on his own deck, but in the stronghold of the pirate.

And then he suddenly remembered the importance of his mission. He must needs be diplomatic. Later—

He laughed hollowly.

"You have a ready wit, Mister Lafitte," he said, attempting cordiality.

Lafitte bowed in response.

"Well," continued Captain Lockyer, suavely, "I will be back for your answer in exactly fifteen days. Of course," patronizingly, "it can be but one way . . ."

Lafitte smiled.

"You are right, *mon capitaine*, it can be but one way," with meaning.

Dominique You coughed again. His face was losing its blandness. Lafitte could not resist smiling.

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But when he was again alone, Jean forgot the Britisher and his mission for a moment. He was thinking of a girl in the moonlight—of a woman's declaration of ideals that had suddenly sprung from the obscure recesses of the years to influence a decision of momentous import to a whole nation.

In that fleeting clairvoyant instant Jean Lafitte saw what it is given to few men to see—and recognize.

He saw that he had reached a turning-point in his life.

Being only human, he was appalled. And thrilled. And vaguely disquieted.

Jean sighed.

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH:

*Wherein Laurent Mercier Beards
the Lion and His Excellency
Calls a Council*

I

HIS Excellency frowned.
“Am I to understand, sir, that you wish to interview me in reference to Mr. Lafitte?”

The Honorable Laurent Mercier nodded briefly. He was a spare, hatchet-faced gentleman whose voluble manner and haughty nose at once bespoke his French extraction. Like the Lafittes, he spoke an almost perfect English, which was a rather uncommon accomplishment for Creoles, but this may partly be accounted for when one learns that the Honorable Mercier was a prominent member of that august law-making body known as the State Legislature. It may be added that Monsieur Mercier was addicted to making addresses. For this reason, plus the knowledge that the great majority of his speeches had ever been in favor of some form of protection or benefit to his open friends and private business associates—the Lafittes—State Senator Mercier was not exactly ardently popular with His Excellency the Governor.

His Excellency frowned again, portentously.

“I might at least have been spared the infliction of further listening to eulogies of Mr. Lafitte, and the many benefits his piratical trade is bestowing upon our community!” the gubernatorial voice continued with frigid sarcasm.

The Honorable Mercier smiled sweetly.

"If your Excellency will allow me to proceed," he suggested suavely, "you will learn that what I have come to say concerns the welfare of the state. . . ."

"If I am not mistaken, that phrase is ordinarily the ostensible object of your—er—remarks!" remarked the Governor, with thinly veiled hostility.

"Exactly!" agreed the Creole, courteously, "but I have not come here, Your Excellency, for the purpose of indulging in personalities, however—er—enjoyable they may be."

His Excellency loftily overlooked this.

"Therefore, as I am very busy," he suggested, "could it be convenient for you to come another—?" No pretense of courtesy here! When Greek meets Greek—they talk Greek! Likewise, when political enemy meets political enemy. . . .

The Creole imperceptibly straightened.

"When a question of vital importance, concerning the welfare of the state, arises, whom, if not His Excellency, should be informed?" he demanded, brusquely. If possible, the haughtiness of his demeanor exceeded that of the chief executive, himself. Without giving the other time to answer, he went on.

"May I ask, Your Excellency, as to whether or not you received a letter from Monsieur Lafitte this morning, by special messenger?" His manner was imperative.

Governor Claiborne frowned for the third time, angrily. His glance unconsciously strayed to some papers before him, for a brief moment.

"The rascally pirate did have the audacity to write me!" he admitted, irefully.

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The Honorable Mercier nodded.

"And no doubt Your Excellency has taken steps in the matter?" he asked, inquiringly.

"I—have—not!" declared Claiborne, flatly.

Laurent Mercier looked respectfully astonished.

"You do not doubt Monsieur Lafitte's—word, m'sieur?"

His Excellency grew almost apoplectic.

"His word!" he cried, scornfully. "The word of a damned pirate? An outlaw with a price on his head?" He choked momentarily.

The Creole looked pained, but said nothing.

"Of course, I don't believe it, sir! Not a word of it! The damned rascal is merely trying to hoodwink me—pull the wool over my eyes! It is a fairy-tale, sir, that—about the British. Pure nonsense! I could see at once that his scoundrelly offer was only made in the hope that it would avert the just punishment the government is about to bring down on his piratical head—"

"What exactly did he say?" asked the other, as if he were merely an interested auditor. The Governor grimly enlightened him.

"His letter is full of lying patriotic and altruistic phrases. He admits that, though 'being fully guilty of having evaded the payment of certain customs duties,' " quoted Claiborne, ironically, " 'he had never lost his loyalty and affection for the United States, and that, notwithstanding the fact that there was a price on his head, he would never miss the opportunity of serving his adopted country.' The impudence of it!" He laughed harshly.

"Is that all?" asked Mercier, quietly.

"He offered the services of himself and men in de-

fense of the state and the city, on condition that they were granted a pardon for past offenses!" said he, explosively. "You can see for yourself that is merely a ruse!"

The state senator grunted.

"And what of his enclosed information?"

"Humbug, pure humbug! As if the British would condescend to make a pirate such a ridiculous offer!" He sniffed scornfully.

"But what of his information?" persisted the Creole, thoughtfully.

"There is a mass of information which he claims he has gotten in various ways, as to the strength, resources, and plans of the preposterous expedition . . . but of course it is all false. Merely a blind."

"I do not think so, Your Excellency."

Claiborne stared at him.

"What!" he ejaculated.

Mercier's face was grave.

"I believe that Lafitte is perfectly sincere . . . and that his information is correct!" He folded his arms and gave the other stare for stare.

His Excellency looked at him, agape.

"It is preposterous, I tell you!"

"I beg to differ!" haughtily.

Claiborne scowled. He was not used to open defiance, and the fact that he could not very well resent this angered him the more. He fell back upon a frigid reserve.

"I am very sorry that I cannot agree with you."

"What will you do, sir?"

"Do? Nothing, of course!" His face was adamant.

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Mercier stepped forward and gripped the edge of the old mahogany desk.

"Do you mean to say that you, the Governor, will not pay heed to his warning?" he demanded, tensely.

"The Governor of Louisiana will have no dealings with a pirate!"

"It is the duty of the Governor of this state, however, to guard the welfare of the state!" he said, with meaning.

"Exactly," said Claiborne, with forced suavity, "and, as Governor of Louisiana, I will not defile the dignity of my high office by treating with a pirate."

"It is not a question of dignity!" cried the Creole, angrily; "it is a question of the public safety! We are threatened with invasion—or worse. And an attack on New Orleans is highly probable! It is the duty of Your Excellency to take immediate measures to protect the lives and property of the people who put you in that office!"

Claiborne rose to his feet, red with anger.

"And who are you, sir," he thundered, "to tell the Governor his duty?"

For a moment the state senator was silent, staring him in the eye. The very air of the great room was vibrant with a suppressed excitement.

"The People!" he snapped, quietly.

For a fraction of a second the other paled, too astounded at the other's unexpected retort to reply. He stared at the daring mortal with fascination.

"The People?" he repeated, mechanically. "You are insane! If any one man is the People, as a unit, who is it but I, the chief executive?" His overweening egotism was simplicity itself.

For a moment the Honorable Mercier was disarmed.

"I was slightly mistaken," he riposted; "my title is Public Opinion. Yes, Public Opinion!" He glared defiantly at the other, rather proud of his statement.

His Excellency sneered.

"The People defies Public Opinion, then," he said, calmly.

The Creole grew furious, but fought to control himself.

"*Très bien, m'sieu!*" leaning forward. "When Public Opinion, backed up by the 'Left'—denounces—impeaches the Governor of Louisiana for neglect of duty—for *treason*, perhaps—which will prevail? The Governor, who refused to take steps for the protection of the citizens—or Public Opinion—the *People?*"

For a breathless, charged moment the two glared at each other, both pale with excitement.

Then, as suddenly self-possessed again, but speechless yet, Laurent Mercier bowed politely and before His Excellency could say a word to stop him, had turned on his heel and left the gubernatorial presence.

II

That very evening the Governor called a military council, and by nine o'clock every important military official in New Orleans was present, seated around the long conference table in the Mansion library. It is noteworthy that the assembly was in every respect military in character. Neither legislator nor landowner, banker nor merchant, was there.

Claiborne came to the point immediately. In a few

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well-worded sentences he apprised his auditors of the letter and information sent him by Lafitte, but made no mention of Mercier's visit, which, indeed, had forced him to take some action.

"What does he definitely warn us of, Your Excellency?" asked Commodore Patterson, thoughtfully.

"Lafitte claims that an attack in force is to be made on both New Orleans and Mobile. He offers us the services of himself and his men in their defense."

"How much, exactly, does that mean?" interrupted Colonel Forbes.

"He claims to have a well-armed and trained force of over a thousand men," answered the Governor, after referring to some papers. There was a general exclamation of surprise.

"The army could use them," said Forbes, reflectively. "They're hardened fighters, all of them . . . and dare-devils if there ever were any."

Commodore Patterson interrupted:

"To my thinking, since they're seamen first, they—"

"Since they are Louisianians, and Creoles at that," put in Major Borland, bridling, "it is most fitting that they join the militia."

"Not so fast, gentlemen," interrupted the Governor. "We haven't accepted his offer, as yet." There followed a moment's silence.

"What does Lafitte want in return for this information, assuming that it is true?" demanded Patterson.

"He asks that all proceedings against Grande Terre be abandoned, that amnesty be given himself and his followers; and that an act of oblivion be passed, by

which their past deeds should be forgiven and forgotten."

"Fair enough," said Colonel Forbes, brightening; "it's—" Claiborne looked at him coldly. He subsided.

"Personally," announced His Excellency, "I believe that it is all merely a trick—a ruse whereby he can secure a pardon."

"Jove! but I believe Your Excellency is right!" exclaimed Patterson.

"And so say I!" put in a Colonel Ross, who had hitherto listened in silence. "To quote General Jackson, these Baratarians are hellish banditti—and should be destroyed, root and branch!"

"Then you doubt Lafitte's sincerity?" said Claiborne.

"Dammit, yes!" put in Patterson, testily. "In my opinion those inclosed letters you have, sir, are forgeries!"

"Decidedly so!" said Colonel Forbes, sagely.

"What man in Lafitte's position," demanded Major Borland, triumphantly, "would refuse a captaincy in the royal navy? It's preposterous, and Lafitte's a fool to try and make us think so! And His Excellency says the offer included thirty thousand dollars, in gold. That's easily to be detected as a falsehood, aside from its absurdity. Why should the British—tried veterans—want the aid of these smugglers? No doubt they despise them for backwoodsmen. No, suh! *That's* not like the British, and you know it, every one of you!"

The company nodded affirmation. They all had had

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a close acquaintance with the British character, often to their cost.

"Gentlemen," said Commodore Patterson, gravely, "we know very well that the British would deem it beneath their dignity to deal with pirates—that they despise them. Shall it be said that we, too, condescended to treat with common smugglers—law-breakers?"

His Excellency nodded approval, but said nothing.

"The only negotiations I want to carry on with Lafitte," said Colonel Ross, hammering the table-top with his clenched fist, "are bullets!" There was a general chorus of affirmation to this pugnacious sentiment.

"Therefore," said the Governor, "'we must hurry forward preparations to attack Grande Terre in force. If it were not for these French fools in the Legislature, I could have cleaned out that smugglers' nest long ago. But they refused me money. Most of them are secretly connected with the Lafittes, or I miss my guess!"

The others assented warmly.

"Of course there is no possibility of the British really attacking New Orleans . . ." ventured Forbes, half-heartedly. He was speedily convinced of the impossibility of such a contingency by a well-controlled shout of laughter, led by the Governor, himself.

"We shall meet with some opposition," said Claiborne, after a while, "so we must make haste, and work as secretly as possible. Commodore Patterson will command the expedition, of course. It will be best, I think, to make a surprise attack—"

"There'll be loot and to spare, take my word for

it!" broke in Ross. The whole company involuntarily stiffened, as if reminded of something that had lain dormant in their brains, but which had not been allowed to awaken.

Claiborne laughed unpleasantly.

"Yes, gentlemen, there will no doubt be loot in plenty . . . but as for me, I want Jean Lafitte, dead or alive! Remember that, Commodore!"

"Most decidedly so!" put in Colonel Forbes, sagely.

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH:

*How a Friend Arrives at Grande
Terre, Who Proves to Be
an Enemy*

I

THE MAN who had fought with John Paul Jones spat dexterously through the open French window.

"We gan depend on Mercier, *bosse*, if only—"

"Of course we can," Lafitte answered, impatiently, "but we can't depend on what that fool of a Governor will do. After all, Mercier can't control *his* actions."

Dominique You pulled on his villainous-looking pipe with great enjoyment.

"Maybe nod, but dat Claiborne cannot help seeing dat w'at we say is true. He simply muz b'lieve us!"

"Then why the devil doesn't he send an answer?" demanded Lafitte. "It's almost a fortnight since I sent him those papers and the letter, and yet I haven't had a word in reply."

"He must still be t'inking it over. You mus' rememb', *mon capitaine*, dat he is a ver' cautious man—and a fool!"

"But this is a serious affair, Dominique. It's a question of the public safety."

Again the veteran privateersman communed with his pipe before answering.

"*Très bien!* W'at do you care if he don't accept? You did youah duty, *bosse* . . . dat is enough for you to worree 'boud."

Lafitte made a gesture of impatience.

"Don't you remember what Captain Lockyer said?" he demanded. "What he threatened to do in the event of our refusal?"

Dominique You abruptly removed his pipe from his lips.

"*Morbleu!* I had forgotten!"

"He promised to return with a fleet . . . destroy our settlement and hang us all, if you'll remember—"

Apparently the Creole remembered.

"—And I believe him," eloquently.

"*De bosse* is nod afraid of dat puff-bag?" with surprise.

"Don't be foolish, Dominique. You know that the British could blow us out of the water if they had a mind to. And I am inclined to believe they will have a mind to."

"And you weel refuse?" with a curious side-glance.

"Of course! You don't think I'm a damned turncoat, do you? I've thrown in my lot with the Americans, and with them I'll stay, whether I'm welcome or not. Just because there's a conceited fool in the seat of authority, who is our enemy, is no reason why I should not help the people he represents. I shall stick to my friends!"

"And when Lockyer returns?" suggested Dominique You.

"I shall tell him my decision, and then be damned to him! A man's conscience is his own. But Jean Lafitte isn't ready to be hung out of hand, yet. If necessary, we'll fight. At the worst, our men could escape to the mainland and hide in the swamps, but I don't think it will come to that. I think that I can persuade them

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to keep their unwelcome attentions to themselves." He smiled reflectively.

"W'at do you mean?" the Creole asked, all interest.

"We shall merely make Captain Lockyer's neck responsible for mine," he said, and chuckled at the other's expression. "We'll just keep Lockyer and his officers here as hostages for the duration of the war, and inform Colonel Nichols at Pensacola that they will be well treated, but that their lives will be forfeit for ours. They'll believe us, never fear. We're only pirates, you see." He laughed again.

Before Dominique You could answer, however, there came an interruption. The door of Lafitte's sanctum flew open, admitting an obviously excited Baratarian. Hardly waiting to touch his forelock, man-o'-war fashion, he broke his news.

"Dere is a wahsheep in de pass, *mon capitaine!*"

His two auditors rose hurriedly to their feet.

"It is *un Americain, bosse!*" added the newcomer, breathlessly.

Jean and his followers glanced at each other and smiled. A curious coincidence, this. And a welcome.

Without another word the trio hurriedly made for the beach where they found all confusion. A milling throng was massed at the water's edge, awaiting the arrival of their new allies; it could be seen that the Baratarians—to all appearances—were by no means sorry to make peace with the government.

At Lafitte's approach, a path through the dense crowd magically appeared, and he eagerly looked toward the pass connecting sea and bay. There, a quarter-mile away, a frigate, fullrigged, her snowy canvas bellied out by the wind, was entering Barataria

Bay. From her masthead hung the American flag, its thirteen red stripes, with its ring of stars on a blue background, adding a colorful note.

And from every port on the larboard, or port, side, peered the wicked black mouths of cannon. Dominique turned to Lafitte thoughtfully.

"Do you notice de guns, *bosse*?"

Lafitte nodded.

"Dey mus' t'ink dat de Britishers are here," ventured the Creole, "and wish to impress dem."

"It's more likely that they wish to impress *us*," answered Jean, dryly, then grasped the other's arm. "Do you see that, behind the frigate? It's another ship—two—three!"

A babel of excited comment arose, its contagion sweeping the throng. Apparently, a considerable fleet had come to Grande Terre. By now the frigate was well within the harbor, and her decks could be seen to be crowded. A second ship was entering the bay and others were bearing up into the wind and tacking about in the attempt to maneuver their way into the narrow pass. Had this been a hostile fleet, it would never have gotten this far, for the narrowness and difficulty of navigation made it an ideal spot for defense against enemies by sea. But suppose this fleet were unfriendly?

Perhaps thoughts like these were annoying Lafitte and his lieutenant, for both of them wore an air of uneasiness. As the second newcomer entered the bay, Lafitte gave Dominique a whispered order. A few moments later the latter and a file of men were hurrying back to the Manor.

Jean turned a worried look seaward. If these ships

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should happen to be inimical, they could have Grande Terre at their mercy. Yet it was impossible that Claiborne could prove so base. . . .

But a sudden silence had fallen on the crowd—a silence so accentuated as to be felt. Premonitions of impending danger were besieging more than one, but the majority were merely apprehensive. Weapons and scowls began to appear simultaneously. Angry murmurs began to sweep the beach, leaping from group to group.

Of a sudden—so suddenly as to be breath-taking—the unbelievable happened.

With a detonating crash and roar, the frigate fired a broadside; the balls passing slightly over the heads of the Baratarians, to bury themselves in clouds of dust in the village square.

For a brief moment there was a stunned silence. The shock of the act—the utter unexpectedness—had turned the crowd to stone. But only for a moment. That pregnant space of time passed, and pandemonium reigned.

"Tracasserie!"

The cry raced from lip to lip . . . "treachery" indeed! Black treachery—heinous treachery!—unforgivable treachery! If the warship had intended to inspire fear, it had accomplished the reverse. Rage, royal rage, and righteous anger were there instead.

A second broadside followed the first with more disastrous effect, for a man on the outskirts of the crowd was killed. The colony of Grande Terre was now thoroughly alarmed.

"Aux armes!"

"To arms," by all means! Although the Baratar-

ians were caught like rats in a trap, they were by no means cowed. Not they!

"Aux armes!"

By now the guns of Bordeaux Manor were answering, and they were voicing their defiance well, for their first volleys found their target. Not for nothing did these dare-devil privateersmen have the name of expert gunners. The second warship now joined the battle. The harbor seemed to be one vast cloud of smoke, with intermittent flashes of fire now and again piercing the haze. Many of the smugglers' vessels were doing their share by way of retaliation, while boats of every description scurried across the bay, making for the safety of the mainland. But many more remained on Grande Terre, resolved to make a last desperate stand.

In a scant ten minutes, it seemed, the village itself was a smoking, flaming ruin. Yells of pain and fright came from the slave stockade, where the black ivory, trapped in the strong inclosure, were being maimed and killed by the falling balls of iron. But even their terrible shrieks but added its mite to the general uproar.

Under cover of the fire of their guns, boat-loads of soldiers were being landed, sent to try to save the burning warehouses, if possible. But to their surprise, the village was still occupied, and a fierce hand-to-hand battle ensued.

Smoke — fire — yells — screams — curses — obscenities — explosions; muskets — pistols — bayonets — swords — dirks — knives . . . implements of destruction, all, and all in use.

Here a group of soldiers beat frantically at the

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flames; there another group fought like wolves . . . wounded, dying, dead . . . dim apparitions appearing and disappearing in the red haze; there a group of demons in red shirts, slashing, cutting, and firing, held at bay twice their number. It was a scene worthy of perpetuation—worthy of the inspired brush of a master.

But every moment reinforcements were arriving from the fleet . . . and as quickly the islanders were slipping away to the mainland—to safety.

Jean Lafitte, disheveled, powder-blackened, and bleeding from a scalp wound caused by a wild musket-ball, half ran, half stumbled, toward the one remaining serviceable gun on the Manor walls. Dominique You, his face gleaming with the unhallowed lust of battle, detached himself from its immediately surrounding murky haze, and ran to meet him.

"What news?" cried Lafitte, gasping.

The man who had fought with Paul Jones cursed expressively. His face was smoke-blackened.

"*Tout est pris!* . . . All, all is taken! De guns are disabled . . . dey are landing more men . . ."

"I know . . . I know! Get the men together. . . . We must make a charge . . . we must get through them! . . ."

Dominique laughed, but his expression was horrible to see.

"De men are leaving, on all sides. *Ma foi!* Dat is w'at we mus' do, too!"

"Never! Let the *canaille* flee for their lives, if they will. Jean Lafitte stays here!"

The old privateersman grasped his shoulder.

"Don't be a fool. We are beat'n . . . beat'n! Do

you want to go back to N'Awleens in chains? To be hung? Let's escape through the secret passage to the mainland. The treasure is safe enough . . . they'll never find it. And don't forget, *bosse*, dat you have a score to settle wid dat Claiborne!"

The Duke of Little Manchac and Barataria cursed fluently. . . . He possessed, it may as well be admitted, a truly ducal profanity vocabulary—a vocabulary with the saving grace of originality.

But passion soon gave way to reason.

"You are right! We will go. . . . Pass the word!"

Then, while Dominique You yelled an order, and then sped away to the banquet hall to open the secret passage, Jean Lafitte sprang to the carriage of the last gun and, pushing aside a grizzled gunner, himself applied the match. . . .

II

"One more salute," ordered Captain Lockyer, "and then be damned to 'em!"

Touching his forelock obediently, the sailor hurried away. The captain, his usual ruddy color greatly accentuated by what was apparently anger, put his glass to his eye and returned to a study of the land which lay off the starboard bow of H. M. S. *Sophia*. For a long minute there was silence, neither of his two companions, junior naval officers, daring to interrupt him.

The frigate, against whose side the lazy waves beat the minor melodies of the cerulean sea, lay at anchor, perhaps a half mile from the shore. Directly opposite the length of the ship, a narrow, twisting, but naviga-

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ble pass gave ingress to a small bay; but what was in the bay, if anything, could not be seen from without.

With a roar that loosened a thousand echoes, a cannon on the frigate's deck spoke, doubtless in response to the order of the ship's commander. As the echoes died away, however, no sign of life could be seen anywhere in the vicinity of the pass.

Captain Lockyer lowered his glass with a curse.

"If I could only get my hands on that dog of a pirate!" he muttered. One of his subordinates, gathering courage, spoke up:

"Couldn't it be possible that no one's there, sir?"

The Britisher laughed scornfully.

"Not there? He's there well enough, but is too frightened to show himself. And I'm not surprised . . . he knows I'd hang him like a dog if I could only catch him!" He growled in his beard. "It's been forty-eight hours since we've been hanging around here, not daring to stick our nose in, for fear they'd blow us out of the water if we did. And that's just what they want us to do! I can swear there's at least twenty heavy guns trained on the other end of that channel. But I'm not so easily fooled as that!" He breathed heavily and glared shoreward over the rail.

"But might I not suggest, again, sir," said the first junior officer, "that it might have been wise to have sent a boat in to reconnoitre? At least you could have—"

"You have much to learn, Lieutenant!" said Lockyer, coldly. "That would be playing right into their hands. If I had sent in a boat, it would never have returned. But there's no use staying here any longer. It won't be long before we come back—in force—and

when we do . . . when we do . . .” His voice trailed off menacingly, into nothingness. . . .

Half an hour later Captain Lockyer, still pacing his deck, watched Grande Terre, covering but a tiny segment of the horizon and dim and dreamy in the blue perspective, disappear from sight behind the level disk of the sea.

And Captain Lockyer of H.M.S. *Sophia* grimly promised himself that he had not seen the last of it . . . which, however, remained to be seen.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST:

*In Which "The Hellish Bandit"
Makes an Offer and "Old Hickory"
Makes an Answer*

I

THE Honorable Mercier swore softly.
"That General Jackson of yours is a fool . . . a stubborn fool!" he cried, beating the table with his fist for emphasis.

John Grymes did not answer for a moment, a deep frown on his forehead. The two, the former district attorney and the Creole legislator, were closeted in the library of the Grymes residence.

"I have just come from Mobile," Mercier continued, "and I might as well have not made the trip. Jackson is a second Claiborne . . . one is as unreasonable as the other!"

Grymes raised his hand tentatively.

"Pardon me, Mercier, but why did you go to him in the first place? I confess I'm rather at sea."

The other looked at his companion in surprise.

"You do not know," he asked, "that I was sent by Lafitte?"

Grymes nodded his head in negation.

"That would be the last thing I would have suspected. Lafitte is a fool to have repeated his offer—as I presume he did"—Mercier nodded in his turn—"after the general's last proclamation. He should have let well enough alone, suh. He has more than proved his patriotism."

"*Sans doute*. But what is this about Jackson's last proclamation?"

"Haven't you heard? He recently issued a savage manifesto denouncing the British for their unusual methods of making war and among the sins he mentioned none seemed to him quite so bad as that of their attempt to employ against the Americans the band of pirates, or 'hellish banditti,' as he called them, led by Jean Lafitte. Indeed, his phrase has become famous in these last few days. 'Hellish banditti'!"

The state senator nodded gloomily.

"But why in the world do the authorities persist in rebuffing the Baratarians? It has been proven that their offer was sincere."

Grymes shrugged his shoulders.

"Precisely. Let's see, it's December now, just three months since Lafitte gave his first warning. The British fleet is expected to enter the river any day. And still they refuse to accept!"

"It's that damned Claiborne who's behind all this, in my opinion," said Mercier, hotly. "Remember how he resented yours, and Livingston's, activities at the time? *Le bon Dieu* knows that we need every fighting man that we can get . . . and yet Jackson refuses! There are at least twelve thousand Britishers at Pensacola; our army is a mere handful, in comparison. I don't mean to disparage our people, for their bravery has been well proved time and again, but, I repeat, what chance have we against the British?"

Grymes nodded assent.

"What will you do now?" he asked.

"Go back to Lafitte."

"Where is he?"

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"Still at the Bayou St. John."

"Have you been there yet?"

"Yes. Lafitte sent for me several weeks ago."

(A smuggler had "sent for" a state senator—and had been obeyed. Strange times, these, when a "hellish bandit" wielded such influence over men of prominence!)

"Most of his old associates and followers are also there," continued Mercier. "When Patterson treacherously captured Grande Terre, he made a number of prisoners, but the majority escaped to the mainland, where they are encamped with their leader on the St. John. Patterson and Ross brought back a vast amount of loot in triumph to New Orleans, but Lafitte tells me that his principal treasure chests were not found . . . are still hidden. The Governor did succeed in breaking up the smuggling activities for a while, I admit, for nowadays business is at a standstill. But he certainly failed to break up Lafitte's band, for they are as strong as ever, and still together, which is far more important."

"Wait until Jackson comes to New Orleans. When he sees the real state of affairs here . . . the utter lack of any kind of defense . . . he will be only too glad to accept."

"I doubt it!" with a grimace.

"Why? He won't be able to refuse, once here. What defenses we have now aren't worth a picayune when compared with the armament that may confidently be expected to be brought to bear on us. So far, our only hope is in Jackson, for if New Orleans falls, the British will have the whole state at their mercy. And if they once get a foothold in the Mississippi Valley,

they will sweep it clean . . . make of it a greater desert than they made of Spain in the Napoleonic wars! Given time and proper action, the Western states alone could pour down a hundred thousand men to repel invasion. And that is what will happen if the British do get a foothold in the Valley. But by that time it will be too late, for our own fields, our crops, will be turned to ashes, and our homes as well. As for our lives and liberties, no more need be said. The British are smarting already with the few defeats they've met . . . and surely haven't forgotten 'Seventy-six. We can rely on them to make existence interesting for us once they get the upper hand!"

Mercier nodded.

"*C'est vrai!* The whole future of the Mississippi Valley . . . perhaps of the entire nation . . . depends on the defense of New Orleans. And this means that it depends on Jackson . . . and *us*."

"One benefit that this crisis has brought about, *mon ami*, is the final disappearance of class and race prejudice between my people and yours. And I am glad! From now on we Creoles are Americans and naught else! You know of the various attitudes that have been taken by one class or another since the purchase of Louisiana from Bonaparte. Now all is changed. We are a common people, fighting for a common cause! Louisianians—Americans, you shall see that we can fight as well as any other man in the defense of our country . . . for it is our country!" The Frenchman, rising to his feet, began to stride excitedly back and forth.

"Think—think, man! Of what we have lived, and are living to see! We have seen the rise and fall of a

great empire—and a far more wondrous miracle still—the birth of a great nation—of two! For not only did the world witness the birth of America, but also that of France. *Ma patrie malheureuse!* She has suffered even more than America. Your country's birth was astounding enough—epochal, true! But the spirit of America was in a new race—a new form of human life on the globe. New blood; hardy, independent, liberty-loving! New stock—new human material—new ideals!

“But *ma pauvre France!*—what of her? Hers was a different birth. The pregnancy of France was one of the most terrible in history . . . feudal oppression—religious oppression—moral oppression! . . . the same monotonous oppression that had beaten down the spirit of our fathers and forefathers. America, at least, has no history of countless years of suffering behind her . . . her people's souls are not seared with the mark of hereditary shame and insult. Her oppression, in proportion to ours, was comparatively non-existent. But it was given to America to pave the way for our freedom . . . for the freedom of the world, perhaps. For that we Frenchmen are grateful.

“The rebirth of France was one of blood and terror, misery and anarchy. America, for all her sufferings, never experienced such an agony of body and soul as did France! Nor ever will, please God! But Frenchmen and Americans, above all other nationalities, should be as brothers . . . and will be, I hope, until the end of time. We Americans have not forgotten young Lafayette, nor the sympathetic ideals he stood for . . . nor have we Frenchmen forgotten Benjamin Franklin—nor Paul Jones! They are a bond between

us—and may the future bring us many more such bonds!

“Did I say ‘we Americans’? I did. And meant it, Mr. Grymes!

“We Creoles are both American and French. American by birth, adoption, environment . . . French by ancestry, custom, religion, and culture. But America is our adopted country, and so it is sure to remain. And we will prove our Americanism, beyond doubt, in the next few days . . . perhaps sooner. If the tide goes against us, then at least we shall have had the consciousness that we die side by side—brothers all—facing our enemies. Ours—the Frenchman’s—for countless centuries past. . . . Yours—the American’s—by reason of the very cause of your birth!”

For a moment after Mercier stopped, the Virginian was silent, his silence a tribute in itself to the Creole’s eloquent outburst. He knew that the other’s impassioned words were not mere cant—patriotic mouthings.

“You’re right!” he said, reflectively. “But to return to our original topic, do you think it will be of any use to approach Jackson with a final plea? So much is at stake!”

“I doubt it! The general told me that the only thing he’d have to do with Lafitte . . . I’ll quote his words . . . would be ‘to hang the hellish bandit’! From what I’ve seen of him I hardly think he is the type to change his mind, except under the strongest provocation! It’s useless!”

“‘Hang the hellish bandit!’ ”

Grymes stared at the floor thoughtfully. What *would* the future bring?

II

Colonel Ross, spick and span in his full regimentals—skin-tight leather trousers, full-skirted blue coat, shining boots, gaudy epaulets, cocked hat, and clanking sword, stepped briskly along the sidewalk near the long white picketed fence bordering the house known simply as "Headquarters" and turned in at the little gate.

The official New Orleans residence of Major-General Andrew Jackson was a long, one-and-a-half-story cottage in a big garden with its side to the street. One chimney alone stood in the exact center of the sloping roof, the lower portion of which sloped down far enough to also roof the long, low porch that ran the length of the house. Near the gate grew a large willow, of a size that enabled it to shade both house and garden.

Greeting acquaintances right and left, the colonel ascended the steps, crossed the piazza, and entered the wide front door, with its hospitable fanlight above; a few moments later he was admitted into the Presence.

Andrew Jackson, thin, querulous-looking, with piercing dark eyes and abundant wavy locks, was clad in a uniform almost the counterpart of the colonel's, with the addition of the insignia of his rank and a startling amount of gold lace.

The general had dark circles under his slightly sunken eyes, which looked up peevishly at the newcomer.

Colonel Ross, nothing daunted, saluted smartly and at once plunged into his business. Evidently he

was giving a report which he had been instructed to bring. Jackson listened attentively.

"Will you repeat the gist of that, please?" he asked, at the recital's end. Slowly, carefully, Ross did so. Through the open window could be heard the loud hum of many voices in the front of the house.

"In other words," said the general, in a heavy voice, "we have little to expect here. The defenses are almost negligible."

Colonel Ross flushed.

"You may count on every man in New Orleans capable of bearing arms, sir. The planters, merchants, bankers, lawyers . . . all . . . have volunteered for service. Creole volunteers are daily coming in by the hundred from the near-by parishes and plantations . . . in every imaginable kind of uniform and with all kinds of weapons. Then we have a company of colored freedmen, and another company of negro refugees from Santo Domingo, men who sided with the whites during their revolution. Even the prisoners in the calaboose will be provided with weapons and released. As you can see, sir, New Orleans is doing her best."

General Jackson nodded.

"So I see. But what can these untrained men do against the veteran legions of the British?"

"Fight for their lives, sir!" snapped the other.

For a moment the general did not answer, but his eyes twinkled. When he responded, however, his voice was more friendly.

"You are right, Colonel!" he exclaimed, honestly, "I beg your pardon! But we are in desperate straits. I am just beginning to realize it. I had no idea of

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the terrible conditions here. I see we must really depend on outside help. Hinds arrived this morning from Mississippi with a troop of cavalry"—Colonel Ross nodded—"and I have just a few minutes ago received a courier who says that General Coffee will be here in a few hours with his brigade—"

"The 'Dirty Shirts'!" exclaimed Ross. Everyone knew of that famous band of frontiersmen from the forests of Kentucky and Tennessee.

"The same!" said Jackson, smiling. "And they are wonders. After a journey of eight hundred miles through the wilderness, they will cover—are covering, according to the courier—the one hundred and fifty miles from Baton Rouge to New Orleans, in two days!" Jackson could not forbear chuckling at the colonel's look of astonishment.

"Added to these," he continued, "we have a thousand raw militiamen, brought down the river on barges and flatboats; and a hundred Choctaw Indians in war paint and feathers!" He smiled sardonically. "What a magnificent army with which to face the British!" he added.

Suddenly, as he finished speaking, the two became aware of a strange cessation of the buzz of voices without. Undoubtedly something of moment was taking place. For a brief space the general and the colonel looked at each other in a mild surprise and wonder. Then, before either had the opportunity to speak, they heard the challenge of the sentry outside the door.

A moment later the door opened and an orderly appeared. His face wore an air of suppressed excitement.

"What is it?" demanded Jackson, with asperity.

"A gentleman to see you, sir . . ." he faltered, uneasily.

"Well, show him in then!" snapped the general, motioning Ross to be seated. Jackson well knew that only a very important personage could have gained access to him at this moment.

The orderly turned and beckoned to some one without.

"Mister Jean Lafitte!" he announced, dispassionately.

And a moment later the Baratarian crossed the threshold.

III

Clad in a full-skirted bottle-green coat, cocked hat, white leather trousers, and polished Hessian boots, the Frenchman presented a gallant figure. He wore no sword, but carried a sword-cane.

The general stared at him in astonished fascination. Ross appeared to be seeing a ghost. Lafitte bowed, and spoke first.

"General," he remarked, pleasantly, "you may possibly have heard of me. My name is Jean Lafitte."

Jackson suddenly came to life, his face red with anger.

"What the devil do you mean, sir," he exploded, "by coming into my presence so brazenly? Don't you know—"

Jean bowed courteously.

"I trust you will pardon my intrusion, sir, at such

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a time," he said, with deep regret apparent in his voice, "but I felt it my duty to my country to come."

"Duty? How dare you mention duty and your country in the same breath! You have overreached yourself this time, you damned pirate. . . ." He proceeded to overwhelm the Baratarian with abuse until he was exhausted by his efforts. It was a noteworthy fact, however, that he did not call the sentry to arrest his audacious visitor.

Lafitte stood silent, coldly aloof, his face only showing courteous interest. Indeed, he appeared slightly bored. . . . Colonel Ross looked at him with admiration, forced to pay tribute to his aplomb.

When the storm had somewhat subsided, Lafitte spoke.

"Pardon my interrupting you, General, but I came here to speak to you, and I mean to do it if you order me hung in five minutes." Jackson quieted down and stared at Lafitte balefully. The Baratarian continued:

"I am a lawbreaker, I candidly admit, and have no defense to make. That matter does not touch our business in any way. If you will remember, General, I was approached by the British government with a most flattering offer, of which I need not go into detail, for my aid in their expected invasion, and, incidentally, was threatened with death if I eventually refused. As you know, I refused; and not only did that, but warned the authorities of the attack on New Orleans that is planned, and even furnished them with important papers given me by Captain Lockyer.

"That alone, sir, is an impregnable proof of my patriotism and love of my adopted country, for which,

if I may say so, I should have been thanked. But, on the contrary, as a reward for my good intentions and information, which last has since been proved to be perfectly accurate, the authorities sent a fleet to Grande Terre . . . utterly destroyed our homes . . . looted our warehouses, and killed many of our men, and more of the 'black ivory.' Many of those taken prisoners have since been hung. I and my friends were forced to flee for our lives and hide for several months in the swamps.

"*That* is the kind of thanks I got for warning the authorities of the great danger which still threatens New Orleans . . . and *that* was the reward I got for offering to risk our lives in the defense of this city! All we asked in return was a pardon for our past misdeeds and a chance to reform and become law-abiding citizens." Lafitte drew himself up proudly.

"I ask you, General Jackson, before God Himself, is that justice—or is that honor?" he thundered. For the moment their rôles were reversed.

Jackson was silent, and stared hard at the speaker. . . . All the anger had left his face. Ross watched the Baratarian in fascination.

"*But*, notwithstanding," went on Jean, "the destruction of our homes and the murder of our comrades—we still repeatedly offered our services, the love of our country overcoming our personal animosity. You repeatedly refused. Therefore, for the last time, General, we *renew* our offer. I have come to you myself, this time, well aware of the fact that you will, in all probability, imprison me, or perhaps even hang me outright. But I have taken a chance, well knowing the actual need for my help, to speak frankly.

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"General, I have at my command a body of brave, well-armed, and highly disciplined men who have been trained to fight . . . and are more than willing to do so. The decision rests with you. . . .

"Does the state care to accept their services . . . or *does it not?*"

Lafitte folded his arms and stared Jackson in the eye. For a moment their gazes held . . . and then the general suddenly drooped his chin on his chest, looking down, thinking hard. There was a long pause.

Outside the window could be heard the renewed buzz of voices. Colonel Ross stirred restlessly, his eager gaze on his superior.

Finally Andrew Jackson raised his head and slowly rose to his feet. He had decided.

"The state accepts!" he replied, and held out his hand. . . .

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND:

*Wherein the Pirate-Patriots
Attain Glory, and Two of
Their Number Seek Death*

I

“**W**HERE can I find Captain Lafitte?”

The hurrying Creole with the antiquated musket on his shoulder slackened his pace for a moment.

“De Baratarians? Dey are wit’ de Americans on de Rodriguez Canal, *m’sieu*, and on de redoubts neah de city. . . . *Capitaine* Lafitte is at de canal, I t’ink. . . .”

“*Merci bien*. . . .”

With which word of thanks the rider was off, to disappear down the dusty road, and the old man with the older musket resumed his untiring trot toward New Orleans.

The newcomer on horseback, having reached the fortifications on the canal, now slowly rode along its length, seeking Lafitte. He seemed to note with interest the grim-faced, raw-boned wilderness hunters he passed, who, distributed along the lines, made striking figures with their buckskin shirts, powder-horns, abnormally long rifles, and occasional—tomahawks! Interspersed with these were a few red-shirted Baratarians, personal followers of Lafitte. The main body of the pirate-patriots were stationed at the line of fortifications before the city, where even now the big guns were being placed into position.

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At last the rider reached the object of his search, who, a gallant figure in a resplendent uniform, was conversing with an officer of the frontiersmen.

The rider dismounted. Lafitte turned.

"Jean!"

"Pierre!"

They embraced, and then simultaneously fired a volley of questions. The frontiersman unobtrusively vanished.

"How goes it in the city?" asked Jean, after a while.

"Indeed, we're about to retreat there, for we cannot hope to hold this place long—although we repulsed a night attack with great success. What's news?"

Pierre Dominique brightened.

"New Orleans is swarming . . . excitement everywhere. The women and girls have organized a hospital. *Le bon Dieu* knows we'll need it! We're expecting the British to attack in force any day . . ." He paused. "By the way, Jean, I saw Virginia Grymes—"

Jean stiffened, his jaw tightening. Pierre went on, unnoticing.

"—down at their hospital. She was dressed in white and looked like an angel . . . an adorable angel!"

The other looked away, suddenly interested in the landscape, but his heart was all aflutter, nevertheless. It had been over two years, now, since he had last spoken to her at Grande Terre, and though he had avoided her since, he had found it impossible to forget her. He knew that he still loved her as he loved life itself. But pride—and circumstance—or both—had kept him from going to her in the endeavor to

patch up the old quarrel. . . . Then two years since his conscience had told him the price was too great a one to pay for happiness. But now that he at last was free to go to her, a lawbreaker no longer, but a respected patriot, he felt a strange reluctance. He sighed.

Pierre Dominique continued, his next words well calculated to cause Jean more mental unrest.

"Do you know, Jean . . . that if I come out of this—out . . . of . . . you know what I mean" . . . Jean nodded, gravely . . . "alive I'm going to marry Virginia, if she'll have me. I've intended to speak to you about this for a long time . . . but never had the opportunity."

Lafitte turned his face away again; and still his brother noticed it not, but went on speaking, ignorant of the mental torture he was causing the other.

"Of course, Jean, I'm not really worthy of her . . . she's above me in every way. But I love her—oh, how I love her! If she refuses me . . . I . . . I . . . I . . . don't know what I'll do!" he burst out suddenly, and his face wore a strange look . . . a look foreign to it. Then, as if ashamed of his little outburst, he smiled weakly, and impulsively put his hand on his brother's arm.

"I know, Jean, that I have always been pretty much of a philanderer . . . a trifler. I cared for all women . . . and none of them. And I have always thought—expected—that I would live and die a bachelor. But now . . . all is changed. Love, the real thing, has come to me . . . and I feel that I can't live without her! Oh, *mon frère*, love is a terrible thing . . . and a wonderful thing! Both bitter and

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sweet!" He sighed heavily at some half-forgotten recollection, and again turned to his brother.

As for Jean, his whole being was in a tumult . . . he felt as if he were on fire . . . as if his bare soul were being laid on hot coals. Pierre drove the iron in deeper, still unwitting.

"I realize now," he added, in a low voice, "the sufferings you went through . . . on Mauritius. I was blind, then, ignorant, although I, in my egotism, thought myself wise in the ways of woman-kind—of love. Poor fool that I was, *I* tried to counsel you." He paused a moment. "Do you know, Jean, that once—once, I thought *you* loved Virginia?" He laughed hollowly. He did not add that he had once thought that Virginia was interested in Jean; he could not help remembering De Moulin's words on that memorable day of his own arrest.

For a moment Jean did not answer . . . he could not. Desperately he fought for control of himself, trying to keep the words from pouring from between his lips . . . the words of jealousy, of rancor. Mightily he strove to hold in the deadly poison of hopeless despair that filled his soul. Suddenly he determined to learn the worst . . . to face the true facts. If they were painful, he would accept the pain. In the game of love, all family ties drop away.

He turned on his brother, in his turn, his face pale as death, his coal-black eyes dully alight, as he clutched Pierre's shoulder.

"Tell me . . . Pierre . . . No doubt you know" . . . he asked, tensely, "does—Virg—does Miss Grymes love you?" The question was out. On Pierre's answer, he dimly felt, rested his whole future.

. . . As a drowning man clutches at a straw, he mentally hugged to himself the memory of that one exquisite moment . . . those kisses on the terrace of Bordeaux Manor. Those kisses—they seared his very brain!

As for Pierre Dominique, he stared at his younger brother for a full moment while digesting the content of the question. And suddenly a light flashed through his brain . . . and he *knew*! Following each other in quick succession came soul-disturbing thoughts—barbed arrows of jealousy.

De Moulin's jests—Jean's strange withdrawal from society—the changed demeanor of Virginia during these last two years—her reserve—the unfathomable look that came to her eyes at the mention of Jean's name! Fool that he was, not to have noticed before!

Forgotten now were all blood ties—boyhood affections—fraternal loyalty. Pierre, in his turn, was now on the rack of jealousy. He knew, even now, that if he did marry Virginia he would still be jealous—would always remember that “something” between them. A wave of jealous rage swept over him that left him cold . . . and resolved. He nodded curtly, and when he spoke, could hardly recognize his own voice.

“Yes, Jean, I *know* she loves me.” He paused, hesitated, and turned his head. “In fact . . . you see, I'm *sure* of it!”

Jean turned pale . . . choked a sob . . . and fiercely turned his head away. When he turned it again his eyes were glistening.

“I wish you both the best of luck . . . *mon frère!*”

A quick pressure of the hand and he turned abruptly and walked away.

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Pierre Dominique stared after him . . . looked at his hand . . . stared again at the other's retreating figure. He took an uncertain step forward—and stopped.

“—the best of luck . . . *mon frère!*”

He sobbed aloud.

II

The last belated stars twinkled out of sight and there was that brief period of darkness that precedes the first flush of dawn. Although as yet invisible, the fields stretching out before the American lines . . . that long line of earthworks; timber, sand-bags, fence rails, and cotton bales . . . was sparkling with frost, for this, it must not be forgotten, was the 27th of December. And even the southern state of Louisiana has a bowing acquaintance with winter.

At length the sun rose, dispelling the early-morning mists with an impatient hand, and revealing, to these equally impatient Americans, an amazing sight. There, not more than a half mile in front of the lines, in as perfect alignment as though on parade, was the British army, perhaps eight thousand strong, a blaze of scarlet. The contrast was indeed striking. On one side, the well-ordered legions of the British, aflush with all the pomp and panoply of war; on the other, the comparative handful of defenders intrenched behind—cotton bales. Even as the surprised Americans watched this awe-inspiring sight there was heard the silvery shrill of the British bugles, sounding the advance, and the muffled roar of the kettle-drums.

As they marched within range of the American guns

a loud explosion was heard, and a group of plantation buildings which masked Jackson's front were blown up. Now it was the turn of the invaders to feel surprise, for they suddenly found themselves face to face with a row of ships' cannon, which were manned as seldom guns are manned on land.

Around each gun was clustered a crew of lean, fierce-faced men with red shirts and kerchiefs, caked with mud and sweat. Farther down the line was Captain Beluche, Lafitte's second in command, the same man—by the way—who became in after years an admiral of Venezuela.

The scarlet host steadily moved onward—and onward.

But it was not until he could make out the brass buttons on the tunics of the advancing redcoats that Lafitte gave the command to fire. Then it was that the great guns of the pirate-patriots flashed and thundered, mowing down the ranks of the scarlet invaders as the sickle cuts the grain. On all sides men could be seen dropping, first by twos and threes, and then by dozens and scores.

The bugles shrilly sounded the retreat, which was a rather useless proceeding, as the redcoats were already in sullen retreat. . . .

III

'Twas New-Year's Day . . .

The sun, true to habit, rose again, but on an entirely different scene. In the short interval of three days many things had changed. Now, it could be seen, the

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skillfully intrenched British had thirty heavy guns running parallel to the American front.

But the Americans had not been idle, either, for additional batteries had been constructed, and Commodore Patterson, with wise forethought, had gone through the sailors' boarding-houses in New Orleans with a fine-toothed comb, impressing every nautical-looking man on whom he could lay his hands to serve the guns, regardless of nationality, creed, color, or excuse.

Behind the British breastworks were sheltered their storming columns, awaiting the moment when the inevitable breach would be made in the American lines, while their batteries opened the artillery duel with a crash that shook the skies.

The Baratarians, on whom fell the brunt of the defense, trained their guns as carefully, and served them as coolly, as though they were fighting from the decks of their own dependable privateers.

At the expiration of exactly an hour and a half the impatient British columns realized that they had waited in vain, for their batteries were silenced, their guns dismounted, and their parapets leveled with the plain.

A band of buccaneers, reinforced by a few score American blue-jackets and volunteers, had decisively whipped the laureled veterans of Nelson and Wellington! And the conquerors of Napoleon's Old Guard had been conquered, in turn, by a group of French Creoles. Poetic justice, indeed!

On the morning of the 8th of January began the death struggle. By this time Jackson had received the long-expected reinforcements from Kentucky—

twenty-five hundred strong—who had just arrived in a naked and half-starving condition, after a forced march of fifteen hundred miles from the Blue Ridge. These foot-sore, ragged, and hungry mountaineers were scattered along a three-mile front, one end of which extended so far into a swamp that the soldiers stood in water waist-deep by day, and slept on floating logs tied to trees by night.

When the gray mists of early morning lifted, the scarlet columns could be seen advancing across the fields. The battle was on—and the fate of America hung in the balance.

General Jackson, lantern-jawed, lean, and excited, reined up his horse at Dominique You's battery. On all sides was excitement . . . the fever of the battle was at its height. The man who had fought with Paul Jones, at sight of the general, made his way to him through the spasmodic clouds of smoke. His own battery was silent, strangely enough.

"What's this, Dominique?" demanded Jackson, testily. "Why have you stopped firing? What the devil do—"

"Because the powder's good foah not'in'!" snapped back the Baratarian, saluting. "It might do to shoot blackbirds wit', bud nod dese dam' redcoats!"

"Tell the ordnance officer that I will have him shot as a traitor in five minutes if Dominique complains again of his powder!" ordered Jackson to an aide-de-camp, and continued his way down the lines; cheering, directing, exhorting. "Old Hickory" well lived up to his name that day!

Although the battle had lasted but twenty minutes as yet, and was destined to last but five more, both of

the Lafittes were present in the thick of the fight; indeed, their courage and intrepidity were to become by-words for years to come. One could not but marvel at their magnificent contempt of danger, their reckless bravery.

But there was one thing alone that none but themselves knew. No one, moreover, could be expected to know that these two brothers had resolved to die in this battle, and were courting death, each in his own way.

Jean, ever since his talk with Pierre Dominique, perhaps a fortnight before, had lived as if in a daze. But one thought was uppermost in his mind—haunted him by day and by night—that Pierre loved Virginia—and that Virginia loved Pierre! Or so he believed. Ordinarily, shrewd and analytical that he was, he would have dispassionately and deliberately considered the situation, weighing and testing each of its multiple phases, but now, blinded and deafened by the emotions of love and jealousy, he did not for an instant doubt his brother's veracity. All during these past two years the thought of Virginia Grymes, alone, had kept up his courage . . . and he had gloried in the hope of some day seeking her again . . . and of coming to an understanding. He had been sure—fool that he was—that she yet loved him. For rumor itself had never in all that time linked her name to that of any man's. And then, that one divine moment of surrender—those kisses!

Now, once more a respectable citizen of the United States, he was to have gone to her again—and claimed her. Nothing could induce him to believe that she had merely flirted with him, as she had told him.

But Pierre's lie had changed everything. There was nothing more to live for. For her love for him had been but a pretense . . . she *had* but flirted with him. And he had not believed. Now he *knew*!

Good Pierre Dominique! Honest Pierre! Life-long comrade, nearest relative, and dearest of friends! Doubt Pierre? Never! Dear old Pierre! *He* loved Virginia . . . and Virginia—loved him! Why should he intrude his misery—his unhappiness, upon their happiness? If it had not been for—for what *had* taken place, there would have been no girl on earth whom he would so sincerely have recommended his brother to wed. Why should he selfishly feel jealousy? All was for the best. He was not worthy of the Virginian girl . . . undoubtedly not! And Pierre Dominique *was* . . . without doubt!

Thus reasoning, Jean unselfishly had resolved to seek death.

And Pierre, too, for an altogether different reason, was seeking death.

He, also, had had his fortnight of mental torture . . . of jealous brooding and retrospection. Pierre Dominique, not quite as big-minded, or unselfish, as was his brother, had no thoughts of giving up his love to Jean, just to secure *his* happiness! He knew now that Jean loved Virginia; but that fact alone did not serve to inspire him with thoughts of renunciation. The fact that infuriated him was that he was reasonably certain now that Virginia loved Jean . . . and that she was not destined for himself, whatever the outcome of the battle.

Therefore, he, too, was seeking the death that ever eluded him. But both brothers were now discovering

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that death invariably side-steps from the path of men who eagerly seek to meet it.

And now the battle was drawing to a close, and both Lafittes were yet alive . . . and death still was—but was it?

The ebb-tide of the battle had begun.

Slowly but surely the shattered British regiments, demoralized by the sudden fall of their commander, Sir Edward Pakenham—who was even now dying behind their lines—and their own proud ranks fearfully depleted by the American fire, were losing ground, their morale gone.

Sir Edward, on his deathbed, gave his last order.

"Sound the charge!" he murmured. "We must take them by storm . . . or all is lost! The honor of England is at stake. . . . Shall a handful of yokels take it from our keeping?"

Close on the silvery message of the bugles ran the shouts of the officers. Encouragement—profanity—exhortation—curses—pleading. And cowed and discouraged as they were, the remainder of the crimson host, still far outnumbering their untrained opponents and still smarting with their injuries, listened to their officers and took courage once more—the courage of desperation. Individually infected with the enthusiasm of the mass, their fury self-whipped by thoughts of their humiliation, they responded with a deadly vim. The troops of England the invincible, England the all-conquering, were being defeated by a comparative "handful of yokels." The veterans of Trafalgar, Waterloo, and the Nile, their divisions shattered, were in danger of ignominious extinction.

With a universal shout of mingled hate and triumph

the living red mass, still awe-inspiring in their numbers, charged at a run and swept across the field toward the American trenches, hell-bent into the very jaws of death.

Although hundreds were momentarily falling before the Baratarians' cannon fire, the majority rushed onward up the slope, in a desperate last-hope attempt to scale the intrenchment, and overpower the Americans in a hand-to-hand encounter, by sheer weight of numbers.

As it happened, Jean Lafitte, commanding the Baratarians, was stationed in almost the exact center of the American lines, upon which was naturally directed the brunt of the British attack.

Through the smoke he saw the British columns charging, ever onward, in spite of their continuous loss—driven through the rain of death by the magnificent courage of their indomitable officers. And he knew that in another moment the red line would reach his breastworks and, if unchecked, might sweep over by its sheer weight and perhaps yet turn the tide of battle.

They must be checked, and at once. Everything was at stake!—everything!

With Lafitte to think was to act, and in this case it seemed that the thought and action were simultaneous. By a freak of fate, at just this instant there was the briefest lull in the cannon fire, as sweating gunners feverishly reloaded . . . and the enemy was halfway up the slope, their ranks torn and ragged—but still advancing!

With a hoarse shout Jean sprang upon the crest of the earthworks, brandishing his sword with an un-

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intentionally heroic gesture. . . . In the comparative stillness his full voice, ever powerful, rang out and swept up and down the lines with the clearness of a trumpet!

“Baratarians, charge!”

With a great shout that rose even above the crackle of musketry and the intermittent roar of the guns, the pirate-patriots surged over the earthworks, their muskets spitting death, and followed their beloved leader in a wild, glorious charge down the bloody slope.

“*Vive Lafitte!*”

The battle cry rose simultaneously, spreading down the lines, as rank after rank of the Americans poured over and down, their guns now silent, but their bayonets flashing murderously as they charged.

Amid a shower of balls, Jean, a few yards in advance of his men, ran on, his blood singing in his veins with the lust of battle, recklessly braving death in his determination to die. Not far behind him came his friends—de Moulin, Grymes, Dominique You . . . Pierre. And close on their heels came his red-shirted followers, a scarlet mist in their eyes. How glorious it was to die!

With a terrific, air-shaking shock, the two charging hosts met, and the next moment seemingly assimilated . . . a crimson caldron . . . hand-to-hand, blade-to-blade; shots, yells, groans, curses . . . Wrestling bodies, falling bodies, writhing bodies . . . Inferno.

As he fought, Jean felt a joyous lust sweep his soul, and plunged into the thick of the fight again and

again. Seconds were eternities. Of a sudden, before him, he saw Pierre Dominique engaged with two Britishers. Even as he watched he saw one bayonet his brother, as his fellow swung his musket stock to crush the Frenchman's head like an egg shell.

Even as the musket descended Jean fired the last shot in his pistol, and the redcoat toppled forward. The next moment he saw De Moulin appear from the red mist and fall on the first Britisher with the fury of an avenging angel.

A moment later Jean was kneeling at the side of his brother, heedless of the flying bullets, his face ashen.

And then it was that the remainder of the British columns that had charged up the slope broke and ran.

It was now eight o'clock, and the American bugles shrilled their call!

"Cease firing—"

All along the lines the rows of weary, powder-grimed and blood-stained Americans were cheering . . . with their caps madly swinging on the ends of their long, hot rifles . . . and cheered even more tumultuously as Jackson—whom this victory was to make President of the United States—followed by his staff, rode slowly down the lines, his passing the signal for the regimental fifes and drums to burst into "Hail, Columbia." All was joy—mad, mad joy. The impossible had happened . . . the Americans had won the day!

But there was no joy in the heart of him who was largely responsible for this victory . . . the pirate-patriot.

For Lafitte, with a file of silently sympathetic Bara-

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tarians, was hurrying his brother to the city—to the hospital . . . racing with death.

But death, gluttoned already with British blood, grinned hideously.

And Jean Lafitte shuddered at the sight.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-THIRD:

*How One Lafitte Repeats a
Prayer, and Another Enters
The Valley of the Shadow*

I

FRANÇOIS DE MOULIN clutched Jean's arm eagerly, his dark eyes filled with anxious forebodings.

"W'at—how—w'at does ze docteh say?" he demanded, huskily.

Lafitte did not answer until he had completely closed the door of the room from which he had just emerged. And François, catching sight of his abnormally pale face, felt a sinking of the heart.

"He says . . . there is very little hope . . ." He choked and sobbed, but De Moulin saw that his eyes were dry. "Father Chambertin is with him . . ."

François stared at him as if in a trance, his hand falling abruptly to his side.

"Not—not—" he faltered.

Jean nodded, his head averted.

"Father Chambertin is Pierre's confessor," he said, rather unnecessarily. With his hands locked behind his back, he began to walk up and down the little room . . . back and forth . . . up and down. For a moment François stared at him, his own eyes wet and his heart trembling with pain. Yet, even in the midst of his own emotion, he could not but marvel at the self-control of Jean . . . unknowing that it was impossible for the other to find physical relief in mere tears

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. . . that the great grief which had come to him was pent up within his breast, racking his soul, yet leaving him dry-eyed and tortured as no man had ever been tortured before.

With an inarticulate murmur François turned to stare at the closed door behind which lay his friend, who even now was making his peace with the All-High, preparatory to venturing into the Valley of the Shadow. His head falling upon his breast the Creole gazed at the floor, unseeing.

Through the open French window could be seen a Virginia cardinal in a flaming red coat, perched upon the branch of a venerable magnolia, pouring forth a symphony of sound . . . a tribute to the glory of life; expressing his thanks to the Omnipotent for the boon of living. The air was heavy with the balmy fragrance of roses and the sweet perfume of oleanders.

Somewhere below could be heard snatches of low conversation. Suddenly came the sounds of prancing hoofs on cobblestones and the indescribable whir of carriage wheels; the equipage slowly coming to a stop. Sounds of renewed conversation. A well-ordered babel of voices

A step upon the stair. First animated—then faltering. A light step.

Lafitte, engrossed in his thoughts, did not notice, beyond a vague, momentary wonder as to the identity of the person who was invading the upper regions so thoughtlessly. De Moulin, however, looked up sharply, with mild resentment for the intruder.

Suddenly the person stood in the doorway . . . and paused.

For a brief moment De Moulin stared at the in-

truder in astonishment, and then, fiercely brushing his eyes, bowed in the direction of the door and, turning quickly on his heel, vanished through the French window on to the balcony without, disappearing from sight.

Suddenly sensing the presence of a stranger, Jean slowly looked up.

It was Virginia.

For a timeless space they stared at each other.

As she recognized him, she started violently, colored, and her hand uncertainly clutched at her bodice. For another moment there was an embarrassing silence. Pale as death, the Frenchman looked at her, devouring her with his hungry eyes . . . his heart wildly thumping against his ribs. It was the first time he had seen her face-to-face for a period of two years. If anything, he thought she was more beautiful than ever. For the moment he forgot the man who lay in the next room—forgot life itself—while his starved soul feasted itself upon her beauty.

Her pallor suddenly returning, she averted her embarrassed eyes and looked quickly toward the closed door across the room. Jean, intercepting the glance, felt his heart sink like lead . . . and returned to realities.

He bowed ceremoniously, averting his tell-tale eyes. She nervously returned a curtsy.

Being a woman, she regained her composure first.

"How is your brother—Captain Lafitte?" she asked, falteringly.

He bit his lip, and for a moment was silent. Her pallor deepened.

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"Pierre is at—confessional." He vaguely marvelled at his own poise.

She looked at the closed door in fascination, not pretending to misunderstand his meaning. He saw her eyes suddenly fill with tears, and, turning his back on her, rapidly walked to the window, to hide the tortured soul that stood revealed in his own.

"I—I cannot begin to express my—my"—she paused, groping for words—"grief and sympathy . . . Pierre—your brother is a very dear friend of mine . . ."

He started at her words, but did not turn.

"I was expecting you to come," he said, slowly, and did not see her look of surprise at his words. For a moment she was at a loss.

"Perhaps this is an ill-chosen time to say so, sir, but allow me to compliment you for your—bravery!" she said, half shyly. "I, like your brother, owe my life to that same bravery, and can well appreciate its worth. . . ." Virginia paused abruptly, and could have bitten off her tongue, for she suddenly remembered that Pierre was—at confession! The irony of her words! She flushed with embarrassment, but Jean still did not seem to see her.

"I would to God that I were in his place!" he exclaimed, dispassionately.

She did not answer, but unaccountably flushed again. The years seemed to have vanished, as if they had never been.

"Why?"

"Why?" he repeated, incredulously. "*You ask me that?*"

She nodded uncertainly. He paused.

"Because I have nothing to live for," bitterly. Jean Lafitte was only human, after all.

Her face expressed her astonishment. He continued speaking, quickly, to hide his embarrassment.

"Do you remember a certain evening two years ago, mademoiselle?" he asked, abruptly.

She did not answer, her face averted.

"It was a moonlight—"

"Don't!" she pleaded.

He swept on, unheeding.

"—night. Do you, by chance, remember our conversation?"

Virginia was silent.

"Do you remember," he went on, "what you asked of me?"

"Yes," slowly.

"And what I answered?"

She nodded, her eyes fixed on his in fascination.

"Do you remember, mademoiselle," he swallowed hard, "those—*kisses*?" His eyes were burning—glowing. It seemed to Virginia that she could detect his very soul imprisoned in those magnetic eyes.

She shivered with a strange emotion, and turned scarlet with embarrassment.

"Mr. Lafitte! . . ." The crimson wave receded and rose again.

He laughed shortly, painfully.

"Afterwards—you said you were flirting, mademoiselle. But I did not believe you—I could not believe—" She started. "But now I do believe!" he added, bitterly.

Virginia paled, and grasped the back of a chair, to steady herself.

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Jean Lafitte bowed to her again, with elaborate courtesy.

"I repeat," he said, quietly, "that now I do believe. *That* is why I say that I wish with all my soul that I were on Pierre's death bed!"

The Virginian girl looked at him with astonishment, amazed at his frankness, his utter lack of self-consciousness.

"You are surprised?" asked Jean. "Don't be! It is best to remove our masks. I was a fool—a blind fool! But it is too late now for vain regrets. You are right, mademoiselle. I was, and am, naught but a pirate! An outcast from decent society—a pariah! Your choice was wise. I cannot blame you. I merely pity myself—and curse circumstance." In a sense, his words were meaningless; an incoherent rigmarole.

"What do you mean?" in real astonishment.

"Evidently everyone who comes into intimate contact with me must suffer! Even you and Pierre cannot enjoy happiness . . . for the bullet that should have reached me was directed toward him by the malignant fate that watches over Jean Lafitte!"

Virginia stared at him, full of wonderment. As for Jean, he was even more amazed at himself, for his unpremeditated outburst, but, now that he had begun, he resolved to finish his peroration, sparing neither himself nor his companion. He felt that his whole being was in an uproar . . . in a chaos of crucifying emotions.

"I confess that I cannot understand your—wild words, Mr. Lafitte," the girl said with hauteur. "Allow me to believe that they were born of your great—grief. You know not what you say, sir!"

He smiled—a sad smile. A sudden transformation had taken place in him at her voice.

“You are right, mademoiselle. I do *not* know what I say. Please forget and forgive my words. But I mean what I said. It may interest you to know that I sought death on the field with an ardor with which I have never sought anything else. Life is all wrong, somehow—and I will not try to understand its mysteries. They are not for mortal eyes. But Pierre’s fatal bullet *should* have reached me, instead of himself—”

Virginia interrupted, vexed at the mystery in his words.

“Why do you repeat that, sir?”

“Why?” he repeated. He could not help thinking that they were both back at the same point in their conversation that they had been at its beginning. “You ask me that?” unconsciously repeating, too, the same words he had used five minutes before. “It is because you and Pierre—”

But he was never to finish his sentence. At this juncture the door of Pierre’s room opened slowly and a portly tonsured priest garbed as a Capuchin came out. As he caught sight of the lady a strange expression flitted across his face, but he said nothing.

The two others looked at the ecclesiastic inquiringly, but he gave them no time to question him.

“My son,” he said, softly, “your brother wishes to speak to you.” He drew closer. “Pierre Dominique Lafitte has made his peace with his Maker,” he continued, “therefore I advise you, *mon fils*, to be as forgiving as your Master has been.” He crossed himself. “Be not hasty in thy judgment,” he went on enig-

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matically, although in a kindlier tone, "for it is more blessed to forgive than to punish."

Jean looked at him in bewilderment.

"What do you mean, father?"

The old Capuchin looked at him pityingly.

"You shall know in good time, *Deo volente*."

He pointed to the closed door.

Without another word or glance toward the girl, Jean Lafitte opened the door—visibly stiffened—and went in.

The heavy door closed behind him. The old Capuchin turned toward the girl, his face grave.

"My daughter—"

II

As Jean stepped over the threshold he unconsciously paused, the sudden transition from sunlight to semi-darkness causing him to blink. All the windows of the room were heavily curtained.

At the upper end of the chamber was a huge canopied bed on a dais. On this lay Pierre Lafitte, the outline of his body thrown into strong relief by the wavering light of the tall candles grouped at his head and feet. On his breast, beneath his crossed hands, lay a crucifix. At the sound of Jean's entrance the dying man slowly turned his head, and it could be seen that his mustache and imperial, once the proud object of his tender care, had lost their well-groomed air, in the same strange manner that he himself appeared to have lost his former *débonair* worldliness.

In less than a moment Jean was at his side, tenderly taking one of his brother's hands in his own.

"How are you feeling, Pierre?"

The other smiled faintly.

"I am at peace—almost."

"Nonsense! We'll have you up and about in another week, Pierre. Don't be so pessimistic."

Pierre made a weak sign of negation.

"The sands of my life are running out, *mon frère*," he whispered, weakly; "it is useless to blind yourself to the truth. Don't weep, brother mine, for it hurts me—it *hurts!*" A groan escaped him.

Jean dashed away the moisture from his eyes.

"It is but the smoke from these candles that makes my eyes smart," he lied. For a few moments he was silent, head bent, as he awkwardly patted the hand of his dying brother. The latter felt a burning drop on his hand.

"Grieve not, Jean. I am to die . . . it is written. I feel no fear; on the contrary, I am happy. I shall soon be with our sainted *maman*."

Jean gripped the coverlets fiercely.

"Oh, that we could have gone together! Pierre, *mon Pierre*, I cannot let you go alone—I cannot—I cannot!" he sobbed, "into the cold—into the unknown . . . You were made for the light, *mon frère*, for the sunshine—"

"Hush, Jean! I go willingly. And my stay in Purgatory shall be bearable, for above I shall always see our sainted *maman*—waiting, waiting."

Jean buried his face in the bedclothes to hide his anguish, and his brother caressed his hair. What greater bitterness could come to man than that he should watch a dear one die—pass away from sight and hearing—before one's eyes! The crushing heart-

ache of it! The stars shine on—the sun goes on its accustomed way—yet, how can they?

Again Jean was a child—a boy—a youth. But always the younger brother—the youth whose hero Pierre had been. With the rapidity of lightning a swift succession of scenes passed through his mind—incidents from his boyhood days, youthful memories . . . And always there had been Pierre—brother Pierre. Father, mother, and brother, all in one! His father Jean could not remember, and his mother but dimly, but there had *always* been Pierre! Pierre with his understanding sympathy; Pierre with his ever-ready aid; Pierre with his helpful advice; Pierre with his unstinted love! Jean groaned aloud. Again he was the little boy, fearful of shadows, and Pierre was his knight-defender. . . .

The ghostly sands of the infinite hour glass trickled ceaselessly, inexorably. But his thoughts sped on.

Unconsciously he prayed aloud, while Pierre listened, and slow tears welled up in his eyes and over. At the foot of the bed grinned the figure of Death, but at the head smilingly wept a beautiful woman with the dark eyes of Jean—

Then, together, they repeated a prayer in unison—a prayer that they had together nightly made in the far-off days of Jean's boyhood. Strangely enough, it was neither their "Ave Marias," nor any other prayer used exclusively by those of their faith. It was a prayer used by countless faiths—a universal plea to the one existing Deity. What matter if His prophet be Moses, Christ, Mohammed, or Confucius?

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"Our Father, Who Art in Heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven. . . ."

As they chanted on, Jean's voice grew louder—so loud, indeed, as to be heard in the next room. When he began the next stanza, though he knew it not, the old Capuchin and Virginia were both on their knees, repeating it with him. And Virginia was sobbing. . . .

"Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil,
For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory,
Forever and ever. Amen."

The prayer was not particularly appropriate, but it soothed them.

When the two brothers had finished they were both silent for a long while, each busy with his own thoughts, and both unashamedly weeping. But weeping as only brave men weep—men who are not ashamed of their tears. The simple little prayer had brought a slight relief to both of them.

"Jean," said the dying man, at length, "I have a confession to make—and dread it." He shuddered.

The younger Lafitte tenderly kissed his brother's hand by way of answer. His heart was too full to allow him to speak.

"*Mon frère,*" said Pierre Dominique, haltingly, "I have done you a great wrong . . ."

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"C'est impossible! Forget it, mon Pierre!"

"Oublier je ne puis. I cannot forget, mon frère."
His voice gathered. "Jean, my brother, I have done you a great wrong—deceived you—lied to you, God forgive me!"

Jean trembled violently, suddenly sick with a premonition of what was to come. Unconsciously, as if to physically ward off the impending disclosure, he extended his palm.

Pierre, however, once having gained the necessary courage, was not to be put off. There was a semi-hysterical note in his voice.

"I lied to you—lied to you. . . ."

Strangely enough, Jean did not ask for particulars—he merely stared at the dying man, fascinated. Pierre Dominique half raised himself on his elbow; his face was suddenly rendered grotesque—strange—by a curious chiaroscuro—a blending of light and shade—caused by the uneven flame of the burning tapers.

"Do you remember, Jean . . . at the Rodriguez Canal . . . that morning?" The look in the other's face suddenly convinced him that Jean remembered—painfully, "I said—I said that Virginia Grymes loved me—that I knew it." His words were coming in gasps, "Well . . . I lied to you!" He sank back on the pillows, choking for lack of breath.

"You—lied—to—me!" repeated Jean, in a daze. He was as if stunned—suddenly struck treacherously from behind. "You are—mad! You cannot have lied!" he murmured.

Pierre weakly grasped his hand, his face working.

"I lied, Jean—lied . . ." he choked.

"You did not know!" cried Jean, desperately, try-

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ing to make his brother's load lighter, even though he felt himself mortally stricken.

"I knew," mechanically said the other, "and I have suffered the tortures of the damned, Jean . . . the tortures that I shall soon suffer in Purgatory! I knew you loved Virginia . . . and I knew she loved—loves you. And I was jealous and lied!

"Can't you find it in your heart to forgive me, Jean? I loved Virginia Grymes as I've loved no other woman on earth—except little *maman*! Can't you realize?"

Jean looked up, his face a picture of suffering—misery.

"Forgive you? Gladly, my brother. I understand—too well. I too, have loved her—and I understand. Put your mind at ease, *mon* Pierre. There is naught to forgive."

"I have made you suffer."

"For a short time. But it was nothing. Now I am happy." There was a radiance in his face. Pierre Dominique saw it and sighed. Oh, Life, Life! But Death, grinning hideously at the footboard, stepped nearer—and sneered.

"Then I am happy. And can die happy, Jean. . . ." But his face belied his avowed happiness.

"Yes, *mon frère*."

"You will marry Virginia . . ."

"If she will have me!" humbly. Pierre smiled. The expression on his face was simply indescribable: envy—regret—longing—bitterness. . . .

"Never fear. She has always loved you and still does. But, as I said, you two will marry. I know.

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it. And you should appreciate her worth, *mon Jean*. A good woman is man's greatest blessing. As François—good old François—says, we cannot do without them—nor should we. Man born of woman is brought up by woman—trained by woman—and, as he is given life by woman, could not live without her. Virginia is representative of all that is best in womanhood. Cherish her—if not for your own sake, for—mine. . . .” He trembled.

“And Jean . . .”

“*Oui, mon frère.*” The pathos of his voice!

“If there should be a son—and there must be, for you must perpetuate the race of Lafitte . . . if there should be a son, I say—will you name him—‘Pierre’—and tell him of the uncle whom—he—never—knew?”

The tears were coursing down Jean's lean cheeks.

“Yes, my brother . . . by the living God, I *swear* it! . . . If we shall be blessed with a son, he shall be Pierre Dominique Lafitte, and I only hope that he'll be as brave—and good—and noble—as his uncle!” He sobbed again. Farcical this scene may seem, but these two were in sober earnest. All men are—when in the shadow of the inexorable Angel of Death—the divine messenger of finality.

For a long minute there was silence. Then:

“Jean . . .”

“*Oui, mon frère.*”

“You've always looked like the little *maman* . . . I am about to go to her. . . . Kiss me, Jean . . .” He was now too weak to even turn his head . . . a strange light shone in the dying man's face. Jean, leaning over tenderly, reverently kissed his brother on

the lips . . . "Good-by, *mon*—Jean . . ." His eyes were glazing.

"No—no!" cried Jean, suddenly alarmed. "Don't leave me. Pierre!" He sobbed wildly . . . a taper flickered. . . .

As if by a superhuman effort of the will, Pierre aroused himself temporarily from his semi-coma.

"That—is—not—the—Lafitte—way, Jean," he whispered. "Tell—me—good-by!" Already, step by step, he could see that grinning specter at the foot of the canopied bed advancing, his sable wings horribly unfolding, his bony hand beckoning with horrible insistence.

Jean suddenly straightened, and he grasped his brother's hand tightly. He, too, had caught sight of the inexorable march of the specter and realized the futility of resistance.

"*Au revoir, mon frère!*" firmly.

"Till we meet again," not "good-by"!

Pierre Dominique Lafitte smiled, weakly.

The sable specter was almost upon him, but he cared not, for there, above him in a shaft of golden light, hovered the figure of a woman . . . and her eyes were like those of Jean. . . .

"Little *maman* . . ." murmured Pierre contentedly, shuddered, and closed his eyes.

With a great cry Jean sank to his knees, convulsively kissing his brother's hand . . . calling. . . .

The door was pushed open. He was conscious of a crowd surging into the closed candle-lit room. The air was stifling—strangling. His head was light, his feet were slipping away into nothingness. The face

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of his dead brother was growing indistinct before his very eyes. . . .

Suddenly silence. Then, "*Chapeux bas!*" exclaimed a voice.

"Hats off!" indeed. . . .

Pierre Dominique had entered the Valley of the Shadow.

CHAPTER THE LAST:

*In Which Our Pirate Walks
into a Trap
And Hauls Down His Colors*

I

"**I**'AVE news foah you, *mon ami*," said De Moulin, following his host up the broad steps to the white-columned veranda above. Grymes motioned him to a comfortable chair, and sat down in another nearby.

"I can guess at it," he answered, smilingly.

"W'at?"

"Your news."

"Guess away, zen, monsieur."

"I don't have to guess—I know."

"Impossybl'!" with exaggerated doubt.

John Grymes laughed. Before he could answer, however, old Rappahannock, the Grymes butler, made his appearance. As he caught sight of him, the Virginian's eyes brightened.

"A bottle of that claret, Rappahannock. Bin four!" Grinning widely, the old darky turned, but Grymes, struck by another thought, recalled him. "No, wait! Make us a couple of mint juleps instead, Rappahannock—the kind you make at home!" Rappahannock's grin became more accentuated and he disappeared into the cool recesses of the hall of the rambling old mansion. The Virginian favored his guest with a broad wink.

"Wait until you taste that julep, De Moulin.

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There's not a man in the South that can make it like that old darky of mine can."

François smiled.

"As for your news," went on Grymes, fanning himself with his hat, "it's public property."

François, startled, looked up quickly. Grymes intercepted the look and laughed.

"It couldn't but be otherwise, old man. You are referring to the President's proclamation, of course."

De Moulin looked blank. The Virginian chuckled with the glee of a man who has found a responsive audience to which he can impart news of which it is ignorant.

"You guess' wrong," said the Creole. "My news concerns Jean."

Grymes chuckled.

"Of course it does! You can't be thinking of anything else but the proclamation. There's Lafitte's revenge against Claiborne. I'll bet the Governor is as sore as a wet hen!"

"W'at you mean?"

"What do I mean? Lord! Lord! The man doesn't know! I'm talking about President Madison's proclamation, of course! Jean Lafitte and his Baratarians are no longer pirates, but officially acknowledged patriots. That's what I mean! You may not know it, but, after the battle, General Jackson strongly urged Washington to make some recognition of the splendid services rendered by the Baratarians. Now the President has granted them a full pardon. His message ends something like this:

"'Offenders who have refused to become the associates of the enemy in war upon the most seducing terms

of invitation, and who have aided to repel his hostile invasion of the territory of the United States, can no longer be considered as objects of punishment, but as objects of generous forgiveness.'

"Jean Lafitte can hold his head as high as any man in America to-day, François. And, do you know, it was really he and his men who turned the tide at the battle, and who, consequently, saved Louisiana from invasion. Jean Lafitte has made history—and the world knows it! Lafitte, the pirate! Now, it's 'Mister Lafitte, patriot.' . . . How he must be laughing up his sleeve!"

"I know zat all along, *mon ami*. Bud I 'ave ozzer news. Jean eez going to *la belle France*, Mistah Grymes."

The Virginian sat upright with a jerk, abruptly putting down his hat. Footsteps in the hall of the house were heard approaching, but Grymes was oblivious to anything but this startling intelligence.

"What the devil do you mean?" he asked, in astonishment. The young indigo-planter smiled.

"Joos' what I say, Jean eez goin' bac' to France."

The Virginian leaned back in his seat limply.

"Well I'll be damned!" he ejaculated, with emphasis. "I *am* damned!"

"Poor father!" said a sympathetic voice. And Virginia, a cool vision in white, stepped out upon the spacious veranda.

Both men instantly rose to their feet. François bowed gallantly, and she greeted him cordially.

"I beg your pardon, my dear," said Grymes, flushing, "for my er—words, but—"

"But what, father? Of course I'll forgive you.

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But I confess I'm curious. What made you say it?" She glanced archly at the young Creole.

"Reason enough," said her father, brusquely. "De Moulin tells me that Jean Lafitte is going back to France." He looked at the Creole for confirmation, and so failed to see the strange look that passed across his daughter's face.

"Why?" asked Virginia, in a voice meant to be casual.

"Yes, why?" said Grymes. He began pacing the porch. "Here I've been looking forward to an opportunity to repay him for his hospitality to us—*me*"—hastily—"when I was at Grande Terre, and you tell me that he is going to France."

"Foah won zing, I s'pose he want a change of scene," said De Moulin.

"Yes, that's so. Pierre's death broke him all up, I know. *There* was a man for you."

François de Moulin stared into the distance.

"He was won of ze bes' man zat evah live'," he said, soberly, "an' I am 'appee to be able to say zat I was eez fr'en'." He turned his head abruptly.

"*Requiescat in pace*," murmured the Virginian.

"He was a brave man and—a gallant gentleman," said Virginia, softly, her eyes suddenly moist. She thought of that moonlit night at the dance, when Pierre, a handsome figure in cambric frills and claret-colored damask, had made love to her in the little trellised bower under the magnolias. How long ago that seemed—how far away! She could still see, in her mind's eye, the sparkling of his eyes as he told her the story of Jean and Lizette . . . could still hear the musical inflections of his voice. Poor Pierre! What

a great number of things had happened since that time. Now Pierre was peacefully sleeping in the crypt of St. Louis's, and Jean—

"And Jean Lafitte is just as true a gentleman in every respect!" remarked Grymes, assertively. At his words Virginia started and a slow blush mounted to her cheek. She experienced an uncanny feeling, as if her father had taken the words right out of her own mind.

"The only thing lacking in Lafitte's make-up," went on Grymes, thoughtfully, "is his birthplace; meaning no offense. De Moulin," turning to the Creole, "Lafitte should have been a Virginian!" The others laughed and De Moulin surreptitiously cleared his throat.

"I forgot to say," he remarked, "zat anozzeh meestery eez aboud to be solv'. Jean heemself tol' me zat he eez going to Havre, een particular. It seems zat he eez relate' to Lafitte, ze banker of Havre, whose daughteh eez to be married zis summeh to Prince de la Moskowa. I 'ave also learn zat zees Lafitte of Havre eez an int'mate fren' of ze Emperor, an' I would nod be sooprize if Jean neveh comes bac' heah. *Sans doute* . . . weezout doubt, his relations will mek him remain een France. 'An you rilly gan-not blame Jean. He eez reech . . . *très riche*, an' he gan go high een ze service of ze Emperor. Napoleon laks reech men, anniway."

For a moment Grymes did not make any comment, so surprised was he at this budget of news. As for Virginia, her mind was in a chaos. Jean was going away—perhaps forever. She would never see him again. Although her pride would not let her admit

it, even to herself, ever since the day of Pierre's death she had anxiously waited—waited for the coming of the lover—who never came. Everything had been cleared—yet he did not come.

And here she learned that he was going to France—perhaps never to return. How lonely life would be for her—and how passionately she loved him! She did not trouble to deny this to herself, now. She knew it was only too true. She loved him more than life itself. And she was sure that he loved her—or thought so. Yet—he was going to France! She could feel the hot tears of self-pity and longing well up in her eyes.

Suddenly, so suddenly as to attract the attention of her two companions, she murmured something inaudible and hurriedly disappeared within the house.

The two men stared at her with surprise, and Grymes looked openly troubled.

"To tell you the truth, De Moulin," he said gravely, "I am rather worried about Virginia. I hope you will excuse her sudden withdrawal. . . . I suppose she—No, I'll tell you the truth!"

The Creole looked at him in surprise.

"W'at do you mean, m'sieur?" he asked.

"Well, I don't know exactly what to say, because I really don't—can't understand. But the fact is, that Virginia has been behaving rather strangely, here lately. No, I don't mean that, either. I'm trying to say that for some time she hasn't appeared to be herself, exactly. She's not ill, as far as I know, but she eats very little, is unusually quiet, and seems to be worried about something or other. She's *always*

thinking or brooding, whichever you may prefer. I'll confess I'm worried."

For a moment or two the Creole was silent.

"I gan tell you in a word," said De Moulin, wise philosopher that he was, "Virginia eez een love!" He looked keenly at the other.

"Well, I'll be—" Grymes caught himself abruptly. Then he swore to himself softly under his breath. Finally he burst into roars of laughter until the tears came. De Moulin merely smiled.

"Of course that's it!" exclaimed the Virginian, after his mirth had subsided. "Why couldn't I see that before? All girls in love act that way, strangely enough, I suppose I thought my Jinny different from other girls."

"She eez!" put in François, warmly.

"But who can it be?" asked Grymes, a new idea striking him. Then, "It isn't *you*, is it?" with genuine interest.

François sniffed.

"I onlee weesh eet were!" he exclaimed, devoutly, shaking his head in sad negation.

"Then, who in the world—" Suddenly the older man stopped and a shadow of real worry passed across his face. When he next spoke, his voice was seriousness itself.

"It can't be—you don't think it was—Pierre Lafitte?" A real fear had entered his mind, now. If this were the truth, what suffering must his daughter—the legacy of his long-lost wife—be undergoing! With a painful pang he suddenly remembered that her recent absorption could be traced back to the period,

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some weeks previously, of Lafitte's death. His mouth tightened.

But François, understanding his sudden fear, quickly put him at his ease.

"No, eet was not Pierre," he said, earnestly; "zat I gan sweah to!"

"Then who is it?" demanded the Virginian, vexed in spite of himself.

De Moulin leaned forward and tapped his arm slowly.

"Jean Lafitte!"

For a moment Grymes stared at him with utter disbelief, but the look in the other's face convinced him. A wave of relief swept over him, and he could not but tell himself that this intelligence pleased him.

"Then why—" said he, and could go no further.

But the astute Creole understood.

"Jean Lafitte—I know—ees mad about Virginia—*bud—*"

"But what? You say that she loves him, and *he* loves *her*—then why don't they—" he paused—"Er—I'm sure I would have no objections. As I said, I think he is a perfect gentleman, and I believe him to be worthy of her," magnanimously.

François nodded and smiled. Then, glancing around to assure himself of their security from any possible eavesdroppers, he pulled his chair closer to that of the Virginian and began to talk in a low voice. And talked on. And talked.

Ten minutes later, when Virginia reappeared on the veranda to apologize for her sudden withdrawal—having regained control of herself, and, incidentally, having had a self-communion of relieving tears—she

found them, head to head, carrying on what appeared to be a highly interesting conversation. And John Grymes was unashamedly smiling broadly. But she forebore to ask questions.

And a little later, just as De Moulin was leaving, her father turned to Virginia innocently.

"By the way, Virginia, we are having guests to-night for dinner. Just François, here, and Captain Lafitte. We want to bid him farewell before he leaves for France." He turned back to his departing guest and again bade him good-by . . . and, incidentally, temporarily closed his left eye.

II

When Jean and François arrived that evening for dinner, however, although they were intentionally a little late, they found that their hostess was apparently conspicuous by her absence.

"However," apologized their congenial host, "Virginia will be down any minute, I suppose. You know how women are—always late—and everlastingly adorning themselves." Jean laughed politely, but could not help wondering why this very simple witticism should cause his host and companion so much mirth.

While waiting in the library Grymes and De Moulin began an apparently interminable discussion of politics, of a particularly boring nature, and both of them skillfully managed to convey to him the idea that they had forgotten Lafitte's very existence. For a while he looked from one to the other puzzled. Suddenly, as he glanced idly around the room, he became aware of

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the fact that the old negro butler, Rappahannock, was standing in the door, and was undoubtedly trying to get his attention. He glanced at his companions. They were oblivious of him. Getting up slowly, he sauntered nonchalantly over to the door. Strangely enough, his two companions were seemingly as unaware of the plainly discernible darky as they were of his own actions.

He walked out into the hall—and did not see the smiles and winks of the two in the library. Rappahannock stepped close and whispered.

"Marse Lafitte, dars a pusson would lak tuh mek tawk wif yuh, in de gyarden, suh."

"Some one wants to speak to *me*—in the garden?"

"Yassuh."

"Who is it?"

"Hits a—lady."

"Who is she?" Rappahannock shrugged his shoulders expressively.

Lafitte looked at him with suspicion.

"Did she send for me, herself?"

"Nossuh," said the clever old darky, well instructed in his part, "she didn't sen' me—dat is, she tol' me not to . . . Anyway, suh, ah'm pow'ful shuah dat she wants tuh mek tawk wif yuh. Leastways, ah reckon dat she's pow'ful anxious, 'cause she done say—Lawd, man! I'se done gone an' done it!" And turning on his heel, he hurried away down the hall.

For a moment Jean stood still, thinking. He did not for a moment doubt the sincerity of the darky, but was trying to adjust himself to the fact that she had summoned him—clandestinely, as it were! Drawing

a deep breath, he silently slipped out of the front door and into the silvery night.

To the left of the long piazza with its lofty Colonial pillars was one end of the garden. Its other extremity was bounded by the Mississippi, its broad surface sparkling like so many diamonds under the playful shafts of moonlight.

At his back was the stately old mansion, half concealed in a grove of ancient magnolias. Before him stretched a curving red-brick path, winding through the length of the garden. On all sides was the balmy fragrance of many flowers—flowers, for the most part, made invisible in the shadow of huge thickets of acacia and pomegranate and orange trees. The mingling scents of odorous jasmine, crimson-hued oleander, and roses of every species, made the air actually heavy with their sweet fragrance as he followed the path slowly.

Straight ahead of him was a long natural aisle formed by two rows of palmettos, which terminated, almost abruptly, at the water's edge. The night was young—twilight had but just merged into a fragrant evening—and the moon, beginning its lofty climb, could be seen rising, apparently, out of the very waters of the Queen of Rivers; obese, golden, and beautiful.

Somehow, instinctively, he knew he would find her at the end of that aisle at the water's marge. It was as if the hunted woman had fled as far as was possible, down to the water's edge—and the hunter, man, was unerringly bringing his long hunt to an end.

Slowly he walked down the path, his eyes fixed on that magnificent moon; and the intoxication of the glorious night permeated his every sense. At last he

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reached its end—and there, as his intuition had told him, he saw her. She was standing in the center of the little glade, clad all in shimmer, silvery white; leaning with one arm on an old stone sun-dial, staring at the soaring moon.

For a long moment he stood still, feasting his eyes and soul on the picture of her exquisite loveliness. Then he stepped out of the shadow into the drenching moonlight.

With a low cry, as she caught sight of him, she half turned as if to run. Then, changing her mind, apparently, she drew herself up to her full height and remained standing—motionless—silent.

He suddenly felt that he had to say something—and had nothing to say.

“Virginia—mademoiselle—I am here,” he said, somewhat awkwardly.

For a moment she did not answer.

“Really?” she said, rather scornfully.

He felt his face grow hot with embarrassment. And then it was that he suddenly realized that she had never sent for him—never would have. He suddenly remembered the strange actions of Grymes, François, and old Rappahannock, and a great fury welled up within him. He half turned on his heel, with an apology on his lips, when another thought struck—and overwhelmed him. Jean Lafitte was a great believer in Fate. Was this not Fate—this strangely contrived meeting? He would make the most of it—to justify himself. Then he would take himself out of her life forever.

“Miss Grymes, I have something to tell you—something to explain.”

She did not answer, but remained motionless, her eyes fixed on him. He could not know that *she* was in a crucible of emotion—that she was fighting fiercely for control of herself.

“Miss Grymes—once, on just such a night as this, you asked me to do something, for your sake—and I refused. You asked me to drop my piratical life—for I *was* a pirate—and for reasons you know—I refused. But I wish to tell you this, mademoiselle, that, in consequence of what later took place”—he faltered—“I almost betrayed my comrades, because—I loved you. I loved you then, and since, and now. And I shall love you, ma’m selle, till the end of time.” She started perceptibly but made no answer.

“But, because I wished to protect my men, who trusted me, I refused, and you told me—that you but flirted with me. Later, when I became, of my own volition, a patriot, I was able to go to you, but I did not. For I believe that you really did not flirt.”

Still she was silent. Jean rushed on.

“And still later, when I was convinced that you did not flirt”—she started again—“in honor I could not go to you, for I believed . . . was led to believe . . . that you loved—Pierre.”

She half turned from him.

“I know. Father Chambertin told me.” So low was her voice that he could hardly hear her. A meandering breeze fitfully wandered thru the garden, rustling thru the bushes in gentle reproof.

“Still,” he went on, hurriedly, “when I learned that this person—had not told the truth—it made no difference. For I still did not know whether or not you were—flirting—and so, after much thought, I have

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come to the conclusion that you *were*—and I have decided to sail for France—to-morrow. Of course, this cannot interest you, but I merely wished to let you know—that when a *man* loves once—really loves—he can never again love another in the same way. And no doubt it will interest you to know that I have always loved you, ma'mselle, and always—will. But—ma'mselle will, in the future, no longer be troubled with the odium of my presence!”

Then, turning, he began to go back toward the house, but suddenly stopped, for she was speaking.

“Captain—Lafitte,” she was saying, “you have forgotten one thing in your elaborate plan. What of me, sir?”

He stared at her.

“What of *you*, ma'mselle?”

“Yes. Aren't you taking too much for granted, sir?”

He trembled . . . his brain was whirling.

“What do you mean?”

“For the sake of argument, sir, answer me this. You say that you learned that Pierre—that this person—had lied. Yet, how could you know that *I* was not—lying—that night—at Grande Terre?”

He thought this over for a brief moment, puzzled.

“But how could I know?”

“Then why didn't you—ask—sir?” Very low. Why *were* men so dull-witted? But he did not answer—he was stupefied.

She stamped her foot—and he suddenly saw that she was both laughing and crying—together. He stared at her wonderingly.

“Why don't you ask me—sir?”

And then he knew.

"Virginia!" He stepped uncertainly toward her.

"Yes—Jean." How unutterably sweet his name sounded on her lips!

"You *weren't* telling the truth!"

But it was altogether unnecessary for her to answer this, for they were already in each other's arms. . . .

The breeze grumbled in the trees. It had all been such a meaningless performance—to the breeze.

John Grymes and François de Moulin, arm in arm, came down the garden walk, and they were laughing and talking—in low voices. Suddenly rounding a curve, they stopped, and the Virginian, excitedly clutching his companion's arm, pointed toward the foot of the winding path.

There, silhouetted in the moonlight against the bright silver of the river, were two figures, unmistakably in a close embrace.

The head of the man bent downward for an equally unmistakable purpose. But although the lovers were ignorant of the presence of intruders, their friend and ally, the Lady in the Moon, was not—for she indignantly proved her friendship again by retiring forthwith into a quilted bed of clouds. . . .

FINIS

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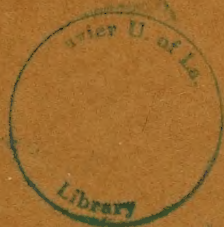
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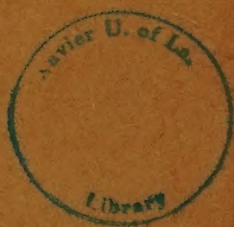








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